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SIGHT&SOUND

INTERNATIONAL FILM QUARTERLY

SPRING 1990

VOLUME 59 No 2



On the cover: Malcolm McDowell in 'A Clockwork Orange'.

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IN THE PICTURE

MABUSE RETURNS

Chabrol pays his respects

From the media viewpoint, the shoot of Claude Chabrol's Dr M was almost trop de richesse. You had Chabrol himself, his long career seemingly on one of its periodic upturns; the fact that Dr M is a homage to the Mabuse films of Fritz Lang, and made on the same ground; a piece of casting-Alan Bates and Jennifer Beals-that verges on the bizarre. Above all, you had the fact that Chabrol was shooting in Berlin, at the moment last autumn when the semi-reunited city of his script was changing

from fantasy to fact.

Chabrol has long wanted to make a film about 'the spirit of destruction'. 'Two or three years ago,' he said. I was speaking with my producer, François Duplat, about Fritz Lang, and he told me that in 1990 the centenary of Lang's birth would be coming up. The two things fitted together'—and history provided

the bonne bouche.

Some thirty years ago, Billy Wilder was shooting One, Two, Three in Berlin when the construction of the Wall took him unpleasantly by surprise. Where he lost, Chabrol won. In Dr M the East-West border has been lowered; traffic passes, the media is shared. Such accurate and timely prophecy seems almost improbable from a director whose sphere has always been the personal. Can Chabrol be changing? 'Yes, absolutely, I try to enlarge my vision.'

The film's original title was The Last Mabuse, but that, Chabrol felt, dwelt too heavily on its debt to Lang. I don't try to imitate, though I hope I am not putting things on screen of which Lang would disapprove, of which he would say, "It's unfair, it's dishonest," as I heard him say of other directors' work the four or five times I met him. It was after I saw The Testament of Dr Mabuse in 1946 that I decided to make films myself.

'Now I'm trying to use all the "M" films to understand the evolution of Lang's style from the German films to the American ones.' Beside the Mabuse pictures, that series would include Metropolis, Moonfleet and M itself. 'I discovered that the letter M plays a big role in his films. A letter that you can reflect on for a long time, the only letter you can stand on its head and it becomes a letter again.'

Dr M is set in the late 1990s, in a Berlin under intolerable stress. The antidote is the vacation club Theratos, like much else in the city, the property of the media baron Dr Marsfeld.



Dr M: Claude Chabrol surveys his set.

'Media power is very great indeed,' Chabrol said. 'So far it has not been used too much. There are good people working there. But imagine if a Dr Goebbels was able to use it.'

As a chain of suicides sweeps Berlin, it becomes clear that Marsfeld is, as Chabrol put it, 'like a magnet, attracting all the elements of destruction to itself.' Before Alan Bates came on the project, it was planned that Sir Richard Attenborough would play the role of Marsfeld, dates permitting. Dates, perhaps inevitably, did not. Jennifer Beals, of Flashdance, is the model whose face and voice issue an invitation to Theratos. 'I wanted someone who really could be a poster girl.'

Filmed in English, *Dr M* is a German/French/Italian production with additional money from Channel 4. Chabrol, however, is determined it shall be a German picture. The third important member of the cast is Jan Niklas, known abroad for playing Peter the Great, as the investigating policeman. 'German actors are very professional and very cautious,' Chabrol said with approval. 'There are no stars in Germany.'

Chabrol acknowledges the influence of Murnau and German literature. There are other echoes, too. The studio walls now being washed black for Marsfeld's nightclub 'Extinction!' were still pale blue from Fassbinder's Querelle. This is the ground on which Lang is said to have shot the first Mabuse movie. Much later, when the studio was built on it, he made The Thousand Eyes of Dr Mabuse

there; and Wolfgang Preiss, who was the lead in that film, is now playing Chabrol's police chief.

admires Chabrol Lang's frightening lucidity of visionmore, the way he always tries to find a style which fits absolutely with this need. The effects in his films are always a necessity. Even when he's too dry for me it works, because his style is so wonderfully adapted to what he had in mind. Lang is an example I try to follow, even though he had something different in mind from me. Not to use two shots when you only need one. No movement when you can do without it. Une espèce de rigueur.

'My own problem is the reverse. I am a clown. I like jokes. I am not rigorous, although I always try to be.' Chabrol admits he has not always been sufficiently rigorous in his selection of projects. 'Some 40 films for the cinema, 22 for TV. And when I am being most indulgent with myself, I have to say at least ten are really bad.' Which ones? 'Anyone can say exactly which ones.'

Chabrol's projects have been stocking up. He is shortly to complete post-production on Quiet Days in Clichy, based on the book by Henry Miller. Next on the slate may be Madame Bovary with Isabelle Huppert, the actress he used to effect in Violette Nozière and Une Affaire des Femmes. There may even be an addition to this cycle on the theme of womanhood with Maupassant's Mademoiselle Fifi, a version, Chabrol says, of the Judith and Holofernes story. Enough to put paid to the canard

that Chabrol is a director unsympathetic to women? 'My men are much worse.' Another shift in focus? Maybe.

'Madame Bovary is a very old project I always postpone. Now it's too late.' Too late for postponement, that is. Shooting should start in September. 'I am sixty—still young—but in five or six years? In five or six years? In five or six years? I will be a little gaga, I suppose.' (Dr M opens in Germany in May. Something of its dark visual quality will be found in the stills on pages 108 and 109 of this issue.)

SARAH GRISTWOOD

CALCUTTA

A prison love affair

India's annual festival moved to Calcutta this year, where it was opened by Satyajit Ray. Huge crowds battered down the doors of the new Nandan Film Centre almost daily to get into the array of international films on display, few of which will otherwise come their way. Bengalis love their cinema and deserve, it was constantly reiterated, an annual festival of their own; though it is to be hoped that Nandan's projection will improve before they get it

Ray, now further recovered from his heart trouble, is happily making another film, this time wholly produced by France. The co-producers, in fact, are Toscan du Plantier and Gérard Depardieu, both old admirers of Ray, and the film is being shot in the same Calcutta studio as Ganashatru. This time, however,

IN THE PICTURE

some location work is also scheduled.

Without at present an English title, the film is a family saga written by Ray himself, with the endemic corruption of India as its subject. We are presented with four generations of a prosperous middle-class Bengali family, stretching from the senile paterfamilias to his grandchildren's children. And the kernel of the piece is the discovery by the old man's son, who has just had a heart attack, that one of his own sons has been involved in shady business practices. Ray wrote the outline of the story years ago and emphasises that the part about the heart attack is not in any way autobiographical.

As Ray was shooting, seemingly in top form and particularly good with the children in the cast, so Roland Joffé, the Australian Paul Cox and Aravindan from Kerala were each planning their own films in Calcutta, probably one of the most difficult cities in the world, at least for non-Bengalis to negotiate. Joffé's seemed to be in most doubt, since there is political opposition to his shooting the French novel City of Sadness in the slums of

This is largely because Bengalis find the Catholicity of the novel harder to bear than Mother Teresa's good works, and because official circles are disturbed that yet another film by a Westerner about India's poverty might precipitate the same furore that followed Malle's Phantom India all those years ago. At the time of the festival, however, most of the large gathering of Indian directors were on Joffé's side. Censorship, they said, should not be on the agenda, especially since the film would almost certainly then be made somewhere else. And, anyway, nobody was forced to like it.

Nobody was forced to like the festival films either; and, in truth, it was a poor year for the Indian Panorama if you take away Shaji's Piravi, Ray's Ganashatru and Mrinal Sen's Ek Din Achanak, already seen in the West. But there was one outstanding film, even though Cannes unaccountably rejected it, Adoor Gopalakrishnan's Mathilukal (The Walls).

Taken from an autobiographical story by Basheer, one of Kerala's most notable writers, the story is set entirely in Trivandrum jail, where Basheer was incarcerated for stirring up trouble with the British during the freedom struggle of the early 1940s. The Malavalam star Mammootty plays the writer and The Walls is centrally about his love affair with a woman in the prison next door, who is separated from him by the wall and

whom he never saw. Neither do we, but what we do see are the signals they give each othershe throwing a twig in the air to signify her presence and he throwing food over the wall in return. Basheer himself eventually left the jail for the freedom he no longer sought.

This is really the second half of the film. The first shows Basheer's hunger strike after languishing a full year without trial, his attempts to befriend the petty criminals with whom he shares a cell, his encouragement as a writer by an admiring prison official and his faithful tending of the roses in a small garden in the compound. All this is accomplished in the minutest detail, so that the prison becomes an almost complete microcosm of the world outside. Two bundles of beedis, a box of matches and a blade-all forbidden but given to Basheer by friendly policemen-seem both to him and to us like extra-ordinary wealth. The other great strength of the film is the warmth of Mammootty's subtle performance, totally different from his usual heroic screen persona. And, above all, the control of pace and rhythm by Gopalakrishnan is immaculate, as is the dark and eloquent photography from Ravi Varma.

The most accomplished Bengali film on display, Ganashatru apart, came from Buddhadeb Das Gupta. Tiger Man (which is probably the most apt English title) is the attractively made story of a factory worker who, during his annual leave each year, goes off to a small village to make his mark as a dancer and folk singer, dressed as a tiger. There he holds court, until a circus comes to town with a real tiger on display. Whereupon the woman he loves leaves him for the romantic tiger handler and his whole world comes crashing down upon him.

Another Bengali film worth seeing was Nabyendu Chatterji's The Axe of Parasuram. Set in a small town in West Bengal which is preparing for the fortieth anniversary of Independence by, among other things, repainting Mahatma's the statue, the film has a local wetnurse, with connections to some of the best families in town, driven unceremoniously out of her hut at the back of the temple as part of the cleaning up operations. She is forced to become a prostitute, and her first patron is one of the young men she suckled as a baby.

This parable, about how far Indians have strayed from Gandhi's original principles, has an excellent performance from Sreelekha Mukherji as the woman and an effective sense of outrage. From Gujarat came Pervez Merwanji's debut Percy, the often touching (if much too long) story of a shy young man with an overbearing mother from the Parsi colony in Bombay who joins the Bombay Music Society to listen to western classical music. He loses his job and then his mother, but gradually learns to live his own life without her succour. This is a genuine attempt to produce a film which will do something in the marketplace as well as making an effective moral point.

DEREK MALCOLM

ARCHIVING

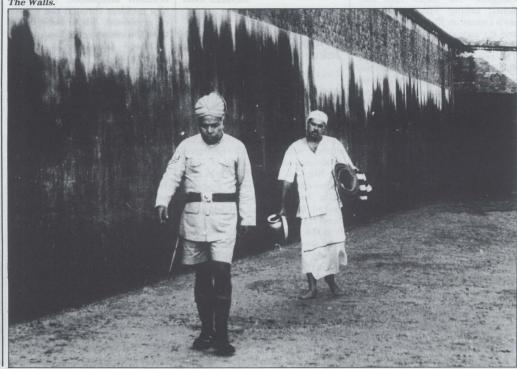
East Anglia teaches a nealected art

Where do film archivists come from? On graduating from London University in the mid-1930s, Ernest Lindgren asked the newly established BFI for a job, was told to organise the bookshelves, and then started to collect some film prints as well. A few years later, we had a National Film Archive. Lindgren had to pick up, or make up, the necessary skills as he went along: for his successors, things have hardly changed. Today's senior archivists continue to learn their skills on the job, the standard entry qualification being an arts degree and a proven enthusiasm for cinema.

David Francis moved direct from Film Society work to become TV Acquisitions officer for the NFA, and eventually its Curator. Anne Fleming moved from vacation work for the Edinburgh Film Festival into a programming job at the Imperial War Museum cinema in South London: now, as Keeper of Film, she manages its very substantial archives. Both of them have presided over a steady growth in the size of their archives, and in the demands made by users. Meanwhile, there has been a healthy proliferation of smaller film archives outside London, in such places as Glasgow, Manchester and Norwich.

The new posts that this growth brings with it are demanding ones: apart from the increasing complexity of the

The Walls.



technology, the squeeze on public-sector funding means that most of them are in effect two posts compressed into one. The old system of learning on the job and of informal apprenticeship has come under severe pressure. Many of the new archivists come from-or are soon seconded to-a training in library and museum work, which teaches a lot about cataloguing and administration but not much about films. Janet McBain did the Archives course at Glasgow University, and was then taken on in 1976 by the Scottish Film Council to set up a Film Archive. Like many before her, she turned to the NFA in London to show her the basics of the job. And of course it obliged her, as it has since obliged supplicants from Ireland and Wales, and from further afield too, since the expansion of film archives is not confined to these islands.

The curators of the main British archives meet regularly in a forum convened by the British Universities Film and Video Council. Last year they agreed it was time to set up a training course—no such course exists anywhere, apart from an option within the undergraduate programme at UCLA. From October 1990, an archivists' MA will be taught at the University of East Anglia in Norwich.

Why UEA? First, we have an established one-year MA in Film Studies, which makes extensive use of British film archives from the user's end. Second, the University's Centre for East Anglian Studies (just down the corridor) is the location for the East Anglian Film Archive, run by David Cleveland. Archive students will spend half their time alongside our other film students, taking Thomas Elsaesser's course on Early Film Form, and my own on Film History and Research (centred on the 1940s). The other half they will spend with David Cleveland and his staff, getting hands-on experience and instruction in archive management, and making outside visits, mainly to laboratories and to the other British archives. The dissertation will be based on work done during a summer-term attachment to an archive other than EAFA.

Academia these days is like film production: it's about the protracted making of plans and of deals (often abortive ones) as much as doing the job itself. In such a context, it has been exhilarating to find this deal coming together so rapidly and with such commitment on all sides. Essentially, it is the course that all the archivist contributors wish they could have taken themselves. Studio Film and Video Laboratories at once offered sponsorship for an initial two years, and the 'Nitrate 2000'



Tjoet Nya Dhien.

group, with its immediate preservation campaign having run its course, donated the residue of its funds to cover the costs of student travel between archives.

It remains to be seen who actually comes forward to take the course, and what they do with it (archive jobs? TV research?), and what happens after the two years. The one note of gloom amid the optimism is the resignation from his NFA post of David Francis, and the current uncertainty about the NFA's future direction. David Francis has been the prime inspiration of this pioneering MA, and in a modest way it will be his monument.

CHARLES BARR

INDONESIA

Living dangerously in Jakarta

For most people, Indonesia's main film connection is as the setting for The Year of Living Dangerously. There is in fact a fully-fledged Indonesian film industry, with about 75 registered producers and an output of 70 to 80 films a year. The selection screened at the recent Festival Film Indonesia, however, suggested that this is an industry beset by problems: low budgets (us\$150,000 to \$250,000), which are seen locally as the main reason for the films' general lack of quality; confusion and ignorance about how best to tell stories on screen; the crippling effect of some artistic traditions and conventions; and the always irrational hand of a state censor.

Sharp Pebbles (Sjumandjaja, 1985), for instance, follows the struggles of two sisters who drift

from job to job continually fighting off their male employers, who attempt to turn them to prostitution. Finally arriving in Jakarta, they find work in a factory where the allfemale work force is abused and raped by the bosses. The women organise themselves at the risk of losing their jobs and approach a government agency to file a complaint. Soon after, the elder sister is reunited with her boyfriend from the country and the film ends on a happy note. But what happened to the labour dispute? It seems probable that the censor stepped in. Depicting a rudimentary attempt at organisation was the boundary of government acceptance; resolution of a problem through the efforts of organised labour was more than the censor could bear.

Other films show what appears to be the heavy influence of the walang kulit, or puppet shadow play, which usually involves a very moral tale related in an extremely static way. When performed in the traditional manner the plays can last up to twelve hours, during most of which the puppets face one another and talk. In Everyone Loves You (Ida Farida, 1989), the story of a baby mix-up in a hospital, characters rarely move about within the frame. The actors also face one another and talk; and the film, like so many Indonesian productions, drags on interminably.

A public desperate for jobs and suitable housing inevitably looks to the cinema for escape: melodrama is the name of the game, and character development is wholly absent. As would be expected, female roles suffer as much, if not more, than male roles. One actress told me that

women in Indonesian films are defined solely through their relationships with others, a censor-approved and virtually mandated situation. And the few women who go outside these roles pay dearly. Arifin C. Noer's Forget the Moon is about a businesswoman who finally recognises her sin in coming home late and neglecting her family. She declares her undying devotion to her husband just in time, as he immediately collapses and dies before what seems to be the obligatory crowd of relatives and neighbours at Indonesian death scenes. In Noer's Yuyun, the Mental Patient, a young woman who has gone screaming mad because of her bad relationships with men is zealously protected by her family after her release from an asylum, until the attentions of a new suitor send her back again.

Good films have of course been made in Indonesia, and it would seem that the industry's greatest loss came with the death some three years ago of the director Sjumandjaja. His films such as Sharp Pebbles and Si Mamat (based on Chekhov's story Death of a Bureaucrat and scripted by Noer) not only develop a coherent narrative but display an earnest sensitivity to Indonesia's social and economic problems. Both Noer and Sjumandjaja attended the Moscow Film School during Indonesia's period of fervent 'non-alignment'.

If there is anyone able to take over from Sjumandjaja, it is Eros Djarot, whose Tjoet Nya Dhien (1988) has been making the international festival rounds since picking up almost all the top Indonesian film prizes. Its eponymous heroine, the leader of a decades-long uprising in the late nineteenth century against the Dutch colonial forces, assumed her responsibilities after her husband's death in battle. Clearly a product of her political environment, she is defined not by her relations with men but by her convictions about freedom for her people. A political and also a cinematic revolutionary.

Having captured the admiration of the Indonesian film community, Djarot and leading actress Christine Hakim lent their voices to a public campaign denouncing the detrimental effect on the development of the domestic industry of Indonesia's nepotistic collusion of government and business. The Indonesian cinema, however, must also make itself worthy of the fight. When the stories and the way they are told no longer bring laughter and catcalls from local audiences, the film-makers will have less reason to fear the big budget titles coming in from Europe and North America.

JEFFREY SIPE

IN THE PICTURE

ROTTERDAM ***

New director, old traditions

Despite worries that the passionate eclecticism of the late Hubert Bals in steering the Rotterdam Festival would be a hard act to follow, Marco Müller, in his first year as director, maintained the festival's maverick spirit and cosy intensity while adding his own personal stamp. Increasing the usual number of films by 50 per cent may have taxed his staff, but publishing excellent bilingual monographs (on Ritwik Ghatak, David Cronenberg and Gennadi Sjpalikov) gave the audience a good head start.

Best of all. Müller continued the Rotterdam tradition of offering a slew of uncommon pleasures unavailable elsewhere. Where else could one find André Labarthe's TV interviewportraits of directors, the multiple versions of Straub and Huillet's The Death of Empedocles and Black Sin (as well as the premiere of their intriguing 51-minute Cézanne), Nanni Moretti's daffy and lively Palombella Rosa, and perhaps the best films to date of Eduardo de Gregorio, Wayne Wang and Otar Iosseliani?

The work by American independents was especially strong and varied. Leslie Thornton's freakishly disturbing and stillin-progress Peggy and Fred in Hell, split between film and video, plants two odd children in an apocalyptic black and white universe of found objects, found footage and lost meanings, perpetually reinventing culture as it slips from their (and our) grasp. Mark Rappaport's Postcards, his first narrative video, charts the dissolution of a romance through crisscrossing postcards and surreal mental landscapes which combine the shifting interiors and exteriors of the two characters' separate

spaces. As in Rappaport's ironic chamber pieces on film, the tensions between kitsch and tragedy are perfectly poised, but video enriches his palette; the tape is only half an hour, but has

the density of a feature.

Made in the hope of raising the money to release Orson Welles' The Other Side of the Wind, Oja Kodar's low-budget Jaded is far from Wellesian in style, and the acting is variable, but as a ferocious European view of the seedy American underside—specifically a number of low-lifes and outcasts in Venice, California over a 24-hour period—the film is stark, unsettling and highly original. A far cry from a cinéphile's effort, this intricately plotted film describes a predatory universe of abuse,

greed and revenge in which the gradual alliance of victims recalls the outcome of Freaks.

Kodar herself plays a promiscuous Italian diva who ironically evokes 'the other Venice'—a self-parodic performance that places her character apart from the others without exempting her from the vicious circle of exploitation. Scarcely less grisly, though more essayistic, Wayne Wang's Life Is Cheap (But Toilet Paper Is Expensive) might be described as 2 or 3 Things I Know About Hong Kong: putatively a thrillerwith a dizzying hand-held chase sequence which must be one of the longest ever filmed-the movie employs scatological conceits and the style of late-60s Godard to evoke Hong Kong as it looks ahead to 1997.

Although Eduardo de Gregorio returns to some of the staples of his earlier scripts in Corps Perdus-a haunted house and a relay between past and present—the implications of shooting in his native Buenos Aires give this ghostly melodrama a political and personal edge that his supple mise en scène and his byplay between Spanish and French dialogue make the most of. Uncovering the layered composition of a mysterious painting done in the 1920s, the plot evokes Stevenson, Wilde and The Phantom of the Opera, and builds to an effectively lavish finale.

Iosseliani's Biblically titled Et

la Lumière fut is a witty, sweetand-sour parable about the corruption and destruction of an African village through commerce. The story is told visually with occasional intertitles, the native dialogue untranslated; pinches of magical realism suggest the everyday otherness of the villagers' life before the woodcutters arrive.

My favourite films in Rotterdam were two hilarious shorts by Luc Moullet-a suite of musical variations on ways of sneaking into the Paris métro without paying (Barres) and a miniature epic depicting Moullet's own tribulations in trying to open a litre bottle of Coke with a twistoff cap (Essai d'Ouverture). Both confirm the impression of Moullet's recent feature La Comédie du Travail that, after two decades of fashioning very funny, pointed, and radically humanist—if technically somewhat threadbare-works, he has finally emerged as the only genuine post-Tati film-maker, with a full mastery of both means and ends. A director of economy in every sense of the word-of physical, mental, monetary and existential expenditure—Moullet combines an anarchist spirit with a formal beauty and rigour to produce movies that are simultaneously packed with political ideas and every bit as funny as the masterpieces of Chuck Jones.

Moullet's background and continuing experience as a film

critic serve him better here than in the amusing, if slight, Les Sièges de l'Alcazar-a 52-minute account of an abortive but potentially utopian flirtation between a male Cahiers critic and a female Positif rival at a Cottafavi retrospective in 1953 because of the more universal reference points: not only the simple subjects of both shorts, but the Tatiesque gag structures of Barres, and the apotheosis of the Pete Smith Specialty in Essai d'Ouverture. Perfectly balanced between the physical and the cerebral, these delightful gems deserve to be seen across the planet rather than remain sequestered in havens like Paris and Rotterdam.

JONATHAN ROSENBAUM

MIKE FIGGIS

From Newcastle to the San Fernando Valley

Slumped comfortably in a director's chair high in the Granada Hills overlooking the San Fernando Valley, Mike Figgis looks every inch the established Hollywood film-maker. Nearby the veteran cinematographer John Alonzo swiftly prepares another lighting set-up while actors Richard Gere and Andy Garcia prowl. Just another balmy day under the relentlessly blue location skies on a megadollar movie called *Internal Affairs*.

Leslie Thornton's Peggy and Fred in Hell.



IN THE PICTURE

If he wasn't quite so down-toearth, Figgis might be forgiven for thinking he had stumbled into a sort of dream. For, after just one low-budget British feature, Stormy Monday, Kenyanborn Figgis is following the path well-worn by the likes of Alan Parker, Ridley Scott and Hugh Hudson into mainstream Hollywood movie-making. Admirers of Stormy Monday, of whom there were many-though perhaps not quite enough in real audience terms to make it a major hitwere quick to note the Newcastle thriller's sheer style.

When so many British films seem haunted by the supposed limitations of the small screen, Figgis' film, despite the odd flaw, was a happy exception: a piece of pure cinema unaffected by traditional native coyness in spite of its unashamedly parochial settings. It could, of course, be argued that by importing Tommy Lee Jones and Melanie Griffith into his tale of city corruption, he was cynically 'Americanising' the package.

In fact, the cultural blend proved seamless, not to mention the perfect calling card for a film director whose background was, to say the least, less than traditional. Raised in Newcastle. Figgis worked first in rock music as a performer with various bands and then in experimental theatre. For ten years, he toured the world with the People Show, eventually quitting the group to concentrate on writing, film and theatre work. His productions, such as Redheugh, Slow Fade and Animals of the City, often combining music and film with live action, toured Europe winning numerous awards. His first film, The House, made for producer Nigel Stafford-Clark and Channel 4, was a direct result of the stage success of Slow Fade. The producer and director joined forces again for Stormy Monday.

At the time, Stafford-Clark said: 'I wanted to make something in the style of films I admired such as Chinatown and Body Heat, both with a great texture and eye for detail. But when you analyse why they are so satisfying, you realise that they have a very strong narrative thread and that the surface texture is relevant to the characters and the plot development. As British films tend to develop from the worlds of theatre and television, I thought it would be difficult to find a writer for this sort of material, but when Mike described his "Newcastle thriller", I realised that with some pruning and shaping we could

'It was never,' Figgis now says, 'my intention to make a *film* noir, though I have to admit that after Stormy Monday a lot of people sent me genre scripts. It

had just been a question of finding the best style for that particular story. Happily, people here in Hollywood liked it and, better for me, understood the intent, also taking into account that it was a small picture and so on. Several companies were interested in doing something. It wasn't the big time and it wasn't silly but there were interesting, serious conversations taking place.'

On a flight to Los Angeles, Figgis finally dug into one of the pile of scripts that had been submitted by his agent. 'There was something at the centre of it which was really fascinating and very unusual for an American script: it was obsessive, sexually obsessive but without being titillating. I got very excited and rang my agent, saying, "Look, this is the first really interesting one I've had. Try to get it." Of course, it turned out to be with Paramount so I honestly didn't think I had a hope.'

Internal Affairs, an original screenplay by the novelist Henry Bean, is about an ambitious Hispanic officer (Garcia) just promoted to the Internal Affairs division of the Los Angeles Police Department. While researching a misconduct case, he becomes convinced that a street cop (Gere) is involved in criminal activities, with a resulting clash between the two men.

The American reviews for Internal Affairs have generally been good and the box office solid. Figgis has arrived and is already embroiled in another Us-based project, Liebestraum.

'It would,' says Figgis, 'have been so easy to come to Hollywood and make a sleazy or small picture: not too difficult if one has already made a reasonably decent film. What was gratifying in my case was that the things I had fought for in Stormy Monday were the very things people picked up on and that there are still studios with some kind of integrity who value your qualities as a film-maker and not just as a potential buck-earner. The cliché is that we British make really good, glossy, stunningly visual films, and it is assumed that we have all come out of advertising and been grounded in the Scott/Lyne school. But there are, happily, people here who do actually differentiate.'

QUENTIN FALK

BERLIN Off the Wall

On the first night of the Berlin Festival there was a total eclipse of the moon. The newspapers were full of portents of the imminent collapse of the East German economy. An ineffectual (and to me incomprehensible) picket stood guard over the opening screening of *Steel Magnolias*. Perhaps it was protesting at why such an irrelevant film had been chosen to open a festival in Berlin in 1990.

Certainly this was the view of German film-maker Helma Sanders Brahms, who resigned from the festival selection committee over its blinkered response to developments in the East. Not that the festival was totally unaware of breaches that had been made in the Berlin Wall. It had indeed arranged for all the competition films to be shown in East Berlin the day after their premiere in the West. But such

stunts as having Sally Field, Olympia Dukakis and other Steel Magnolias stars pose on stage doing victory signs in a cinema in East Berlin was surely not what either Sanders Brahms or Ulrich Gregor, organiser of the Young Forum, had in mind in calling for a focus on East-West and pan-European relations in 1990.

In the event, it was mainly in the West and at the Forum in particular that the serious work of looking at the world after the Wall took place. Eastern bloc film-makers came over to present new work and retrospectives of films banned for twenty years. Outstanding among the banned films was Elective Affinities, 90 minutes (edited from six hours) of incredible black-andwhite vérité footage of the Prague Spring of 1968 with the film-makers eavesdropping on the most intimate high-level conversations as Novotny was being forced out and Dubcek and the reformers prepared to take power. So fresh and urgent was the footage that most of the other 'shelf' films-and indeed the documentaries of more recent events—paled in comparison.

The Golden Bear was won by another Czechoslovakian shelf film, Jiri Menzel's Skylarks on a String, which unfortunately I missed. It shared the honours with Costa-Gavras' worthy but unexciting The Music Box. To compensate for the lack of pizzazz in the Jury's awards, the Festival Director then drew a brand new Bear out of his hat and gave it to Oliver Stone for Born on the Fourth of July, a conjuring trick that drew a gasp from the audience.

The Director's problem was that, although this was in most respects a wonderful festival, the competition was disappointing. The best film, the East German Coming Out by Heiner Carow, was the story of a young man unable to choose between his boyfriend and his girlfriend and wreaking havoc as a result. Beautifully acted, beautifully shot, and containing the most surprising picture of East Berlin nightlife, it nevertheless suffered (to western eyes) from a self-conscious liberalism and an inability to see its subject matter other than as a problem.

Elsewhere in the competition Volker Schlöndorff came up with a platitudinous adaptation of Margaret Atwood's The Handmaid's Tale, scripted by Harold Pinter. As Elia Kazan's The Last Tycoon exemplifies, this is not the first time Pinter has turned a good or even a great novel into a mediocre script. More often than not, though, the problem lay less with the scripts than with the way they were filmed.

Internal Affairs: Andy Garcia.





L'Homme Imaginé: Jacques Spiesser, Marie Carre.

Karel Reisz's Everybody Wins, a story of a private eye uncovering small-town corruption, had a good but rather theatrical script by Arthur Miller which might have made a good film if played as theatre, and even better if done as black comedy or film noir; played and shot naturalistically, however, with a low-key performance by Nick Nolte offsetting some high hysterics by Debra Winger, it was neither fish nor fowl.

Full Moon in New York, by the much-acclaimed Hong Kong director Stanley Kwan, was an even more conspicuous example of a script in search of a director. Starting from the intriguing idea of following the interweaving personal relations of three Chinese-American women, from Hong Kong, Taiwan and the mainland, it ended following its characters from location to location across New York, where they held intelligent dialogue exchanges which could all have taken place against a blank backdrop for all the difference the film style made.

Perhaps Full Moon suffered in my estimation because I saw it immediately after Patricia Bardon's utterly captivating L'Homme imaginé. A woman tries to pick up a man. Rejecting her advances, he pursues another woman. The second woman is attracted to him because, like him, she is in a sort of liminal state, uncertain about her future and the kind of relationship, if any, that she wants. A new-wavish sort of story, and a first film at that, it had all the assurance of the early Truffaut or Chabrol.

Back on the world stage (and of course at the Forum), a docu-

mentary from Hong Kong provided a salutary reminder that not all the Communist world is gently transiting towards democracy. Sunless Days is the moving personal testimony of a Hong Kong film-maker, Shu Kei, about his people's anxieties in the wake of the Tienanmen masacres. Made for Japanese television, it deserves to be shown here. After all, the problem is of our making.

GEOFFREY NOWELL-SMITH

MICHAEL POWELL After and before the Archers

Michael Powell's death on 19 February occasioned tributes which, understandably, concentrated on the achievements of The Archers years and on the lasting notoriety of Peeping Tom. Implicit in most was the suggestion that he had been able to achieve nothing of substance since-and largely because ofthat fateful foray into contemporary guignol. But a virtually blank filmography after The Boy Who Turned Yellow in 1972 gave little hint of the restless energy and imagination which burned on until the very end of this great career.

A definitive list of projects will have to await the publication of the near-complete second volume of his memoirs by his widow, Thelma Schoonmaker-Powell, who did so much to enrich his last decade. This will undoubtedly record the major disappointments surrounding *Ondine* and *The Tempest*, both long-cherished subjects. Some other examples, however, drawn from

conversation and correspondence, underline the persistence of his vision.

There might, for instance, have been a successor to The Thief of Bagdad, if a speculative adaptation of Ursula Le Guin's The Wizard of Earthsea had found backing around the time of Powell's residency at Zoetrope in the early 1980s. This magical tale of a young wizard's apprenticeship amid the precisely imagined Nordic archipelago of Earthsea recalls so many Powell motifs-from the impact of Lang's Siegfried to the Scottish island lore of I Know Where I'm Going and a 1955 ballet short of 'The Sorcerer's Apprentice'that its failure to find backing must be keenly regretted.

During the years of writing A Life in Movies, a Napoleon Bonaparte came to nothing. Pavlova (1983), promoted by his staunch supporter Frixos Constantine, was transmuted into a banal Mosfilm biopic, with Powell confined to the margins as a 'Western version supervisor'. But in 1988, the news that Bela Bartok's remains were to be taken from America, where he had died in exile, and reburied in his native Hungary stirred an old ambition. When filming Bartok's only opera, Bluebeard's Castle (with a libretto by the future film theorist Bela Balazs), as a pioneer 'TV movie' in 1964, Powell had hoped to extend it with other material on the composer. Now he conceived interviews with Bartok's two sons and documentary material on his American sojourn, plus a version of the scandalously erotic pantomime-ballet The Miraculous Mandarin.

The last major project was also inspired by music. One of many festival trips took him to Finland, where near Helsinki he found in the Saarinen house an ideal setting for Philip Glass' opera based on Poe's *The Fall of the House of Usher*. He wrote of this imposing house: 'The outside gives no idea of what it is like inside and suddenly I realised I was inside another man's mind—inside his dreams, his imagination and his genius.'

As the project grew firmer, with promised support from Coppola and Scorsese, and from Jörn Donner, Powell planned to make the house not only the film's defining frame, but also a motif within it, in the shape of an elaborate doll's house version which would be built by Roderick Usher. This in turn would focus his other main idea—the portrayal of Roderick and Madeline as children, seen at the beginning as well as the end of their tragic, incestuous relationship.

Sadly, none of these, nor such scripts as *Thirteen Ways to Kill a*

Poet and A Hero of Our Time (the latter adapted from Lermontov in partnership with his son Columba), will ever now emerge as Powell films, whatever else may happen to them. But aficionados will before long be able to see no fewer than six newly discovered items from the early Powell filmography hitherto believed lost.

First to turn up, several years ago, was a blackmail melodrama from 1935, Her Last Affaire, which includes an early appearance by Googie Withers as a comic maid in a part originally played on stage by Gracie Fields. The synopsis suggests a triteness which, on screen, is undercut by taut narration and overshadowed by some splendidly atmospheric lighting.

Then came a selection of the 'Travelaughs' series, devised when the Rex Ingram company disbanded in 1927 by two of its members, Harry Lachman and Powell, to keep them in the style to which they had grown accustomed. The humour of this loosely linked serial, to judge from the Riviera Revels examples, was as broad as it was thin. But the gangly, disaster-prone portrayal of 'Cicero Baedeker Symp' by young Powell has an undeniable fascination; and a snow sequence filmed in the mountains above Nice manages to bring off some vintage quality sight gags.

Now, after fifty years in a vault at Pinewood Studios, have emerged no fewer than four early features, all dating from before the earliest Powell film previously extant, the 1934 Red Ensign. These include his third directorial assignment, a Philip MacDonald thriller, Rynox (1931), together with Hotel Splendide (1932), starring Powell's first 'discovery' Jerry Verno (later seen as the stage doorman in Red Shoes) and two from the more ambitious Gaumont-British four picture deal, The Fire Raisers (1933) and The Night of the Party (1934).

Credit for attracting these remarkable finds must go to the National Film Archive, already responsible for so much sterling restoration of the later Powell-Pressburger oeuvre, and especially to its features acquisition officer David Meeker. Powell used to joke that his reputation couldn't survive any more discoveries from the 'quota quickie' era. But as we await his final retrospect on a life in moviesremembering that 1968 interview given to Tavernier with its proud confession: 'I live cinema . . I have grown up with and through cinema; everything that I've had in the way of education has been through cinema'-these innocent relics of apprenticeship acquire a poignant appeal.

IAN CHRISTIE

Z R E R A

in Channel-Continent Isolated. The apocryphal headline may be an old joke, but the sentiment underlying it is, alas, still all too real. Thinking European has never come easily to many in these islands, especially among the film and television communities. Recent developments, though, have created an uneasy sense that things are going on in Europe, and that Britain is being left out. As, indeed, we are-a realisation that came as quite a shock to some participants at the British Screen Advisory Council (BSAC) conference, 'The European Initiative: The Business of Television and Film in the 1990s', held in London in January.

The Conference, which brought together some 50 key media decisionmakers (about a third of them from Continental Europe), was obviously intended as a pioneering forum aimed at creating a co-operative base for the European moving-picture industries. The papers raised a number of pertinent questions, suggesting solutions to various problems which bug the industry.

Central to the BSAC strategy was the establishment of a Euro-Fund (modelled on British Screen Finance) to provide a leg-up for pan-European production and distribution-backed by proposals to look at the feasibility of creating a secondary broadcasting market, and of setting up European studios, a pan-European distribution network and even a 'star system'. But in the event it soon became apparent that any fog lay less over Europe than in the blurred perspectives of the British contingent.

'At the beginning of the weekend, the Europeans couldn't quite understand what they were doing there,' says Pascale Lamche of the European Script Fund. 'Everything that was a possibility for co-operation seemed shut away because of British prejudice against non-English material, because of lack of funds, the attitude of the Government, etc. It was a shock for the insular British, who had to realise that the continental Europeans were getting their act together, while clearly the British weren't. But a lot was learnt and it was a fruitful discussion in both directions.

One of the first mists to be cleared surrounded the proposed Euro-Fund. Not surprisingly (since Britain isn't a signatory) the British were largely unaware that such a fund already exists, in the shape of the Council of Europe's European Fund to Promote Creative Audiovisual Works (Eurimage). This £5m fund, created as part of European Cinema and Television Year (1988), is almost identical to the BSAC proposalswith the exception that as things standthe British can't use it, because our Government, almost alone in Europe, has refused to contribute. Naturally enough, the Europeans felt it might be more productive if their British colleagues expended their energies in persuading the Government to participate in the existing venture, rather than in setting up an entirely new one.

For ACTT's General Secretary, Alan Sapper, 'The conference really exposed the British Government's ineptitude in dealing with the European institutions for assisting audio-visual production. We're putting nothing into them and expecting everything out. We're missing out, like we do with everything with this government.'

The lack of domestic funds to match co-production partners' input which has long bedevilled British producers, and especially independents, came up in several discussions. 'One main conclusion,' observes Lamche, 'was that precisely because there was so little production finance available in the UK, it becomes very difficult to talk about the possibility of setting up joint ventures. For example, if the British wanted to collaborate with the French on a straightforward venture, it would be incredibly difficult for the British to raise their 50 per cent of the production against a British territory, whereas in France that situation would be relatively easy.

Nor is this just because France has a larger cinema-going population. As BSAC researcher Ben Keen comments, 'France, Germany and Italy are, in a doing deals, happy sense,

productions, etc, between themselves, because they all benefit to a greater or lesser extent-usually greater-from various subsidies and measures their own governments provide. So they have incentives for partnerships that the UK doesn't.

'Another point which came up repeatedly was the not very significant role of broadcasters in this country in terms of putting up realistic sums of money. French producers can get vastly more money from French broadcasters than is the case here. We're not even talking in co-production terms: just for buying the TV rights, there's an established cost which is significantly greater than here.'

Even so, all the blame can't be laid on the Government or on parsimonious broadcasters. If British film- and programme-makers fail to tap into the considerable resources—both public and private, financial and otherwiseavailable on the Continent, their own attitudes play a considerable part. Understandably, many mainland Europeans are reluctant to co-operate with partners who want everything on their own terms.

Pascale Lamche points out: 'When British broadcasters say, "But we cooperate with the Europeans, we're constantly doing joint ventures and agreements, there's no problem," the French, Italians and Spanish rightly say, "You only co-operate on Englishlanguage material. You don't accept our films and programmes in our own languages. And when you do accept our stuff you pay us so poorly." So one idea was that maybe British broadcasters should have to pay more for foreign material. Also, if more material came into Britain it would change the relationship of the set-up-especially for independent producers abroad-which could then be built on and reciprocated.'

The reluctance of English-language audiences to accept dubbed or even subtitled material has long been a sore point. It's a situation which the Europeans feel is largely due to Britain's low standards and lack of expertise in the area. 'There was a very strong feeling,'

Keen remarks, 'that the UK should get its act together on the dubbing front and push for money to go into developing a professional dubbing industry. Europeans are very familiar with and used to dealing in foreign versions. Dubbing is generally accepted, so they immediately and realistically have a larger marketplace. A dubbed version stands a chance of being commercial in a mainstream sense, which in the end is what the conference was all about.'

All the same, bashing the Brits wasn't the sole, nor even the main business of the conference. Much of the discussion ranged over practical measures to help the entire European industry become more commercially viable. Indeed, as far as independent producers were concerned, it was generally agreed that the British had the edge. The consensus, though, was that everyone, Britons included, needed to become a little more hard-headed and develop a more businesslike approach.

'For a start,' explains Renee Goddard, General Secretary of the European Script Fund, 'there's a need to restructure the way producers get their money. The banks and the City are upset because you don't get your money back if you invest in our industry, and that's partly due to the way the recoupment is structured. The discussion of that was one of the most profitable of the weekend—how do you restructure so that the producer recoups and so has

money for development?'

Fundamental rethinking, it was agreed, was needed in several areas, not just financial. It was clear that economies of scale in production were desirable, but less so how they might be achieved. One proposal is the establishment of a pan-European studio system. 'Unfortunately,' Keen notes, 'the Americans seem more keen to set that up than the Europeans themselves. This is partly because the only European companies big enough to do it are not culturally attuned to it. For example, throughout the conference Patrice Ledoux, General Manager of Gaumont. one of the two largest French companies, was basically saying, "I'm all right, Jack. We have no problem funding whatever size of film we want to make. What's the fuss about?" Now obviously the American companies coming in have the capital base required, unlike the smaller European companies. I happen to know that NBC is going to do just this. They're setting up a European studio to make a series of European-scale films for their movies of the week.'

Fears that if Europeans don't get their collective act together they'll be trumped by the us majors (themselves increasingly needing co-production monies just to survive) also spurred the notion of creating a 'star system'. Whether it's possible to raise European actors' bankability, both here and in the United States, remains to be seen, but the feeling was that if something wasn't done the Americans would pre-empt the process by establishing their own 'Euro-



Euro stars: Sergei Paradjanov, Marcello Mastroianni and Giulietta Masina at the first European Film Awards ceremony.

pean' stars. On a practical level things are already in motion. European Observatory, one of the first projects to come out of the Audio-Visual Eureka programme, is to provide a one-stop computerised database of European talent.

Proposals were also mooted to set up a pan-European distribution network, but the general feeling was that such a network will come about naturally through commercial alliances-as is indeed already happening. (Although it may be that developments of this kind will fall foul of EC competition law.) Exhibition, several participants noted, should form an integral part of successful distribution. As Renee Goddard observes, 'Cinemas have to be nicer places to go to. It's a social problem, and it's not understood by exhibitors yet that television is also a social thingit's part of our culture. We need to study the social architecture of living and towns and where to put a new cinema. I think it should be in a leisure centre.'

On a few topics, delegates seemed oddly reticent—for example, there was

surprisingly little discussion-especially given the presence of Palace's Nik Powell and VCL Virgin's Gunther Datty Ruth-of the increasing significance of the video market in a film's profitability. Again, this was one of the few areas where Britain is a step ahead of its neighbours-but no one seemed prepared to lift the veil. Nor did secondary broadcasting markets arouse much interest. By and large the American model of syndication and small independent stations was thought inappropriate to a European context, and there were doubts that there would in any case be the advertising to support it. Cinema quotas (and perhaps dedicated teleslots) for vision European productions, however, were seen as options to be explored.

It's worth emphasising that, despite all the talk of government subsidies and EC initiatives, it was agreed that the overall aim of the audiovisual industries must be to establish themselves as viable commercial propositions. In general, subsidies were seen as a way of

Don Ranvaud of the European Script Fund (standing, left) with grant winners.





kick-starting expansion, or of supporting problematic areas such as promotion—but, as Ben Keen stresses, they can never be the long-term answer. 'A very strong underlying theme [of the conference] was that of the UK, as well as everywhere else, getting its act together commercially. Ultimately, things had to be commercially viable, and that needed to be faced up to. But it was felt—even by quite hard-headed commercial people—that of any subsidy available a significant proportion should go into marketing and promotion.'

By a slightly melancholy coincidence, the timing and venue of the conference could scarcely have been more apt. January was the first month for many years—perhaps ever, in the history of the industry—when not a single feature film started production in Britain. This could partly be ascribed to events further east, where the expanding and eager film industry of (especially) Czecho-

Now well into the second year of its pilot phase, the whole programme is currently being evaluated by a committee of five independent film and television experts under the chairmanship of Ian Trethowan of Thames. Their report, due in the spring, is expected to be made public, and should have a strong influence on MEDIA 92's future.

Its achievement to date certainly looks impressive enough. Altogether there are eleven projects at various stages of development. The only British-based venture, the European Script Fund, has had, according to Renee Goddard, 'a wonderful year'. So far they've received over 1,000 applications ('that means we're dealing with more than a Hollywood major') and have funded 83, of which about 25 are ready to seek finance.

Goddard sees the Fund as vital in underpinning any hopes of a truly European industry. 'That development in Europe is undervalued is accepted, and therefore the stimulus of the European

European Film Distribution Office (EFDO), which handles such low-budget films as Distant Voices, Still Lives, Babette's Feast, Life Is a Long Quiet River and Drowning by Numbers. EFDO has succeeded in getting around 26 per cent return on investments in an area where 10-12 per cent would be the norm, and is starting to link up with non-EEC countries such as Switzerland and Austria. There's also Euro-AIM (Audiovisual Market for Independent Producers) which, having set up so far at мір-ту, мірсом, Monte Carlo, Berlin and Annecy, managed to sell almost twice as many hours of programming as had been expected. In common with other MEDIA 92 projects, Euro-AIM is developing an extensive database, planned to cover some 50,000 programmes by next MIPCOM. On the strictly financial side, MEDIA

already beginning to happen. A good 90

per cent of the experts who get involved

with the course go away very im-

relevant to a conference so concerned

with the need for breaking down lan-

guage barriers—is the rather ominously

named BABEL (Broadcasting Across the

Barriers of European Language). It is, admittedly, confined to television show-

ings, and has a relatively small budget:

a mere ECU 440,000. Even so, it has

already helped 19 films and TV series,

covering 50 transmissions in 20 coun-

tries. It's also involved in a training

project in Ireland, and in developing

electronic laser subtitling techniques in

Other MEDIA 92 initiatives include the

Another MEDIA 92 scheme—and one which should have been particularly

pressed.'

Berlin.

On the strictly financial side, MEDIA VENTURE and MEDIA GUARANTEE provide respectively financing and extended credit for qualifying productions and producers. EVE (Espace Vidéo Européen), which isn't yet officially launched, will aim to do for videomakers pretty much what EFDO does for film-makers. And so on.

Altogether, MEDIA 92 seems to have met the main criticisms levelled at it in the past: having got itself together administratively, it now has a clear idea of where it's going and what it's trying to do. At the same time, it remains flexible and non-bureaucratic, always open to new ideas, and willing to talk to anyone.

In the long term, it sees its aim as essentially that of forging links, between all the EEC countries and also with the rest of Europe, and between all the relevant existing media bodies. As Julian Friedmann puts it, 'The legal and contractual changes associated with 1992 aren't as important as the psychological changes. Thinking that we must work in a pan-European way will make it so. The real effect will be felt simply in the changing of people's attitudes.'

Both MEDIA 92 and—in its slightly creakier way—the BSAC Conference are signs that those attitudes are changing. Even the British are starting to think European. The fog in the Channel is lifting at last.



Assisted by EFDO: Peter Greenaway's Drowning By Numbers.

slovakia is attracting expatriate American budgets. The long-term implications, Alan Sapper feels, didn't quite get through to the delegates. 'Interest was expressed, but they didn't realise the true import of what's happening. It's a growing cheap-labour market to absorb product from us, and from France and West Germany.'

Events far closer to home, though, seemed often to have passed unnoticed by many of those present. Representatives of the mainstream commercial sector frequently bemoaned the absence of initiatives which were in fact already up and running. Eurimage is the obvious example, but it was noticeable that, at the beginning of the conference at least, delegates from both sides of the Channel seemed to have only minimal awareness of what the European Commission's MEDIA 92 programme has been up to. Luckily, Renee Goddard and some of her colleagues were there to provide an update.

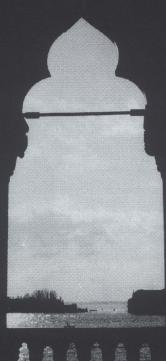
Script Fund package, which includes a script, a business plan, a production budget, and a marketing plan, is very important. Development is something Europeans still have to learn. But even since we started most broadcasters in Europe have increased their development money.'

During its second year, the Fund hopes to be able to work more closely with EAVE (Entrepreneurs de l'Audiovisuel Européen), another MEDIA 92 programme, set up to provide intensive training for independent producers in the arts of project development and coproduction. At least half EAVE's previous year's projects are in pre-production or production, and one is about to go into distribution. Julian Friedmann, EAVE's British co-ordinator, comments, 'It's important that EAVE makes an impact, so that in two or three years' time if you go to a major distributor, like Rank, and say you've been through EAVE, they'll automatically take you seriously. It's TIMOTHY HUTTON

NASTASSJA KINSKI in

VALERIA GOLINO









TORRENTS of Spring PG

ANGELO RIZZOLI PRESENTS A FILM BY JERZY SKOLIMOWSKI
TIMOTHY HUTTON NASTASSJA KINSKI VALERIA GOLINO IN TORRENTS OF SPRING
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CURZON MAYFAIR

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Despite the fact that it has not been seen in British cinemas since the 1970s and has never been shown on TV or released here on video-cassette, A Clockwork Orange remains vivid to those who have seen it and is curiously known to those who haven't. Everyone is familiar with the iconic opening shot—Malcolm McDowell as Alex, an odd mixture of malevolence, menace and seductive charm, staring directly into the camera, grotesque false eyelashes on his right eye, a bowler hat on his head. It's a key image of the 1960s ethos turning sour.

The premiere of the Royal Shakespeare Company stage version at the Barbican in February, in a version by Anthony Burgess himself in collaboration with the director Ron Daniels, has provoked new discussion about Stanley Kubrick's film, the novel, censorship, political violence in authoritarian societies and the dramatic treatment of juvenile delinquency.

The theatre programme at the Barbican begins with a page of recent tabloid press stories about acts of senseless violence in our cities to demonstrate the work's continuing significance. The producers did not need to protest so much. The day the play opened, the London *Evening Standard* front-page headline read 'PUNISHMENT FOR THE 1990s—Jail the dangerous criminals, hard labour for the rest' (a report on the Home Secretary's latest 'reform package'), while on an inside page there was a story headed 'Fear that Stalks the

PHILIP FRENCH

Streets', a report on gang killings and muggings in north London. The day's other main story concerned revelations about an Establishment scheme of disinformation and dirty tricks back in the 1970s, aimed at discrediting radical politicians and known in Secret Service circles as 'Operation Clockwork Orange'.

The middle-aged and elderly have never had any qualms over intimidating the young, either directly or through their appointed agents—teachers, policemen, non-commissioned officers. When they themselves feel

threatened by aggressive teenagers, alarms are sounded, questions asked in the House, commissions of inquiry set up. Consequently, middle-class adults have always been disturbed by movies that take a sympathetic view of juvenile delinquents and teenage gang-war. When Universal made City Across the River in 1949 (probably the first movie to feature high-school kids killing a teacher with a home-made zip-gun), the studio only got the film past the Hays Office by persuading the respected political columnist Drew Pearson to appear in a sober preface, presenting it as an urgent, responsible look at an important phenomenon.

Five years later the British censors banned *The Wild One* outright, arguing that local youths would imitate the activities of the ageing bikers led by Marlon Brando and Lee Marvin. The following year Clare Booth Luce, the US Ambassador to Italy, intervened to prevent *The Blackboard Jungle* (the film that introduced rock'n'roll to the general European public) being shown in competition at the 1955 Venice festival. Two years later *West Side Story* appeared on Broadway, romanticising

gang warfare while at the same time neutralising it with music and the suggestion that life was ever thus, the Manhattan rumbles of the Jets and Sharks being no more than latter-day versions of the confrontations between Montagues and Capulets in the piazzas of Verona.

This cycle of juvenile delinquent (or JD) movies continued into the next decade with the appearance in 1961 of John Frankenheimer's The Young Savages and Robert Wise's film of West Side Story. The leader of the Puerto Rican delinquents in Frankenheimer's film was far removed from the tall, romantic figure George Chakiris played in West Side Story, and he anticipated Alex in A Clockwork Orange. He wore a stylish cloak and fedora and carried an umbrella; he killed without remorse; and he was touched by high culture, having found his hispanic roots in the paintings of Picasso, reproductions of which he displayed on the wall of his slum flat the way Alex made his bedroom a shrine to Beethoven.

In the mid-1950s, the distinguished New York Times foreign correspondent Harrison Salisbury returned to base after six years in Moscow to discover that gang warfare was rife in Manhattan. After following the youthful offenders around New York, he published in 1958 an earnest, widely discussed, now entirely forgotten book called The Shook-Up Generation. The book introduced into common parlance the underground terms 'gang bang' and 'circle jerk' and made what is now a familiar diagnosis-the ills derived from urban overcrowding, lack of opportunities for blue-collar youth, a decline of traditional moral sanctions, weakening of parental control and a general angst vaguely associated with the Bomb and the Cold War. It took another homecomer a few years later to make a deeper, more resonant analysis of the scene that confronted him.

In 1960, the 43-year-old Anthony Burgess, a victim of the end of Empire, returned from the newly independent Singapore where he'd been teaching, to an England he hadn't seen since the 1940s. Like Harrison Salisbury, he was confronted by a volatile, divided society where the last seedily elegant Teddy Boys were still on the streets, race riots periodically flared up, and the first seasonal conflicts were taking place at British seaside resorts between Mods and Rockers. Salisbury's response as a journalist was to get down among the kids and report on their lives, filtering their responses through his liberal prism. Burgess, as a Catholic novelist and linguist, took up the position of prophet and literary visionary. He believed (happily without justification) that he was soon to die and produced in rapid succession an immensely varied series of novels, a dozen within a couple of years, the most celebrated though not necessarily the best of which is A Clockwork Orange, first published in

The anti-hero of A Clockwork Orange, : the vicious, 15-year-old schoolboy Alex, was provided with an ideolect (i.e., a special language devised by an individual) compounded of rhyming slang, baby-talk, Lewis Carroll-like conflations, Romany and, above all, Russian. The Slavic borrowings suggested that Russian culture would impinge on us more than it so far has (though the words glasnost and perestroika, neither of them part of Alex's vocabulary, have become indispensable in the West) and readers without some knowledge of Russian found the novel difficult going or impenetrable, like an appendix to Burgess' beloved Finnegans Wake.

To make the book what we would now call 'user-friendly', the American publishers provided a glossary of Nadsat language compiled by Stanley Edgar Hyman, a distinguished academic critic and Burgess' leading American admirer. Hyman's glossary was appended to the 1972 Penguin paperback without crediting its provenance, thus giving the impression that it had been drawn up by the author himself. Burgess in fact disapproved of it, and also objected to his American publishers dropping his final chapter. However, Penguin Books did not dispense with Hyman's valuable

Alex in a rubbish-strewn London.



glossary or restore the seventh chapter of Part III until *A Clockwork Orange* appeared as a Penguin Modern Classic in the mid-1980s.

The novel is set in an authoritarian near-future, an Orwellian, and Orwellinfluenced, dystopia that combines the worst of both socialism and capitalism, leading contemporary critics to misread it in different ways. Memories of past literacy and social hope are contained in streets named for Attlee, Priestley and Amis. Man has reached the moon, though television seems less important as an agent of surveillance or a source of information than it was in 1984.

The evil Alex, after being jailed for murder, volunteers to undergo aversion therapy which makes him incapable of anti-social acts of an aggressive or sexual kind. Years after Burgess had advanced these ideas, the most articulate anti-authoritarian writer of our time, Arthur Koestler, an imaginative writer with a scientific education, advocated the institutionalised use of therapeutic drugs to curb man's natural inclination towards violence. But since the film used in Alex's treatment is accompanied by the music of Beethoven, he can no longer hear his favourite Ludwig Van without experiencing dreadful pain and

Alex is released into the world incapable of choosing between good and evil. He is unable to function in a society where his former 'droogs' or friends have been co-opted into an ever-more repressive police force. The only people to speak out against the psychic lobotomy of Alex are the prison chaplain and some libertarian intellectuals, a leading figure among the latter being the writer F. Alexander, whose wife was destroyed when raped by Alex's gang.

Burgess' ironic novella is controlled by an invented language that both creates and mediates its future world. The book's central Christian proposition was cogently spelt out by T. S. Eliot in his 1930 essay on Baudelaire: 'So far as we are human, what we do must be either evil or good; so far as we do evil or good, we are human; and it is better, in a paradoxical way, to do evil than to do nothing: at least we exist. It is true to say that the glory of man is his capacity for salvation; it is also true to say that his glory is his capacity for damnation. The worst that can be said for our malefactors, from statesmen to thieves, is that they were not men enough to be damned.'

Stanley Kubrick's film of A Clockwork Orange came nearly ten years after the novel, at a time when certain of the book's prophecies appeared to have come true. It propelled the articulate Burgess into the media limelight where he has remained ever since. The Vietnam War was raging, and following the riots in Watts and Detroit, the violence in the streets of Europe and North America sought to match that going on in the jungles of Indo-China. Publicly shown in January 1972 (though widely previewed in late 1971 to influence



Alex (Malcolm McDowell) in prison. Anthony Sharp as the Minister of the Interior.

media 'opinion leaders'), A Clockwork Orange appeared in the immediate wake of three extremely violent movies that went on to break box-office records. Two of them—William Friedkin's The French Connection and Don Siegel's Dirty Harry—uncritically endorsed the use of maximum force by the state; the third—Sam Peckinpah's Straw Dogs—justified, indeed exulted in, retaliatory violence by a private citizen.

None of these three ran into serious censorship difficulties, but A Clockwork Orange was initially awarded an 'X' in America, the kiss of death for a bigbudget film as most cinema chains refuse to exhibit 'X' movies and few newspapers accept display advertising for them. Kubrick was forced into negotiations with the MPAA and he made a token cut to bring about a reduction to an 'R' rating. At the time, this decision seemed outrageous.

Kubrick's highly stylised film, following Burgess' novel with some fidelity, was a clean-cut moral tale, joining Dr Strangelove and 2001, A Space Odyssey to complete a trilogy of admonitory fables set in a bleak dehumanised future. What was objectionable, one supposed, was the implied politics and the probing of the connection between sex and violence. There was talk of it making gang life attractive, and indeed it does not shrink from demonstrating the pleasure derived from aggressive and destructive conduct. Not long after the film's release, newspaper stories began to appear about gangs imitating Alex and his droogs, though the actual evidence of this is hard to come by, as it is also for the crop of deaths from playing Russian roulette alleged to have occurred throughout Asia seven years later following screenings of The Deer

The critical reception of A Clockwork

Orange was mixed, but generally favourable. The serious reviewers in America were polarised between adulation (Hollis Alpert, Vincent Canby) and derision (Stanley Kauffmann, Pauline Kael). In Britain the least favourable national newspaper reviews came from Patrick Gibbs in the right-wing Daily Telegraph and Nina Hibben in the Communist Morning Star. The movie received Academy 'Award nominations for best picture, best screenplay and best direction. In the event all three Oscars in these categories went to The French Connection and its star, Gene Hackman, was named best actor.

Kubrick's picture did well enough, though not spectacularly, at the box office and went rapidly into profit. It then mysteriously disappeared from distribution in Britain, an absence not immediately noticed. Rumours began to circulate about the reasons for this, especially when no print was available for the National Film Theatre's 1979 Kubrick retrospective. The most persistent, and convincing, was that some lunatic had threatened to kill a member of Kubrick's family if it were to be screened. The director has denied this, though no official explanation has been offered for its withdrawal. The latest rumour is that he is re-editing the film.

Thus few people in this country under the age of 35 will have seen the film (unlike the four withdrawn Hitchcock Paramount pictures of the mid-1950s which were frequently shown by film clubs in bootleg prints before they eventually surfaced in 1984). The screenplay that Lorrimer published in 1972, the only script in the series to have been personally supervised by its director, has never been reprinted, but the absence of musical cues makes it a most misleading guide or aide-mémoire to the film.

What is most disturbing is that many younger filmgoers derive their view of the film from the most readily available verdict, that handed down by Leslie Halliwell in his *Film Guide*: 'A repulsive film in which intellectuals have found acres of social and political meaning; the average judgment is likely to remain that it is pretentious and nasty rubbish for sick minds who do not mind jazzed-up images and incoherent sound.'

It may well be that in our current climate, the British Board of Film Classification might object to the re-release of A Clockwork Orange on video, though there is, I believe, no precedent for the Board not allowing a film once certificated to be re-released in cinemas. But I think the film should be put back into distribution. It is a masterwork that constructs a significant bridge between the early 1970s and the present and is a key film in the fastidious oeuvre of one of the greatest living artists. I last saw the film on the big screen in a tattered print at a Swedish film society seven years ago. Last month I managed to see a crisp American video-cassette of the movie the day before the Royal Shakespeare Company production opened in London. The experience was most instructive.

The stage version, publicised as a musical and clearly a bid to repeat the RSC'S money-spinning international success with Les Misérables, is called A Clockwork Orange 2004. The title deliberately evokes and invokes 2001, A Space Odyssey, and the permanent part of Richard Hudson's set resembles the inside of a red gasometer. But the music by two members of the Irish group U2 (The Edge and Bono) is so much unmemorable percussive rock, and the choreography by Arlene Phillips (creator of the Hot Gossip group) is



Phil Daniels (Alex) and Jaqueline Leonard (Cat Lady) in the RSC stage production.

commonplace disco-dancing. By contrast, Kubrick's movie now looks and sounds like a real musical, with its brilliant use of Beethoven, Rossini, Elgar and 'Singin' in the Rain'. The stage fights are clumsy affairs, lacking in grace and unconvincing as most theatrical violence is. The fights in the movie are both balletic and frightening. We are involved and repelled because the camera presents us with Alex's point of view, while the stylisation distances us from the events.

The casting of the supporting stage roles is designed to utilise actors and actresses from the RSC's current London productions of Hamlet (in the main Barbican Theatre) and Romeo and Juliet (in the small, subterranean auditorium. The Pit). The obvious casting would have been to have Mark Rylance, the RSC's Hamlet and Romeo, play Tony in a revival of West Side Story. Instead, Phil Daniels joined the company as Alex. Daniels brings to the stage a loveable, cockney-sparrow persona he has developed on stage in Class Enemy and in movies such as The Class of Miss MacMichael, Quadrophenia and Scum. He's an Artful Dodger, winsome, winning, sly, but not evil. He is a creation of his environment.

McDowell brought to Kubrick's film an aristocratic, fallen angel quality. He exhibits the same kind of insolent contempt for authority he showed as the anarchic public-schoolboy in Lindsay Anderson's If . . . , the movie that had made his reputation three years before. McDowell commands the film but Daniels fails to dominate the play. The stage-Alex is surrounded by crude caricatures, the screen-Alex moves among skilfully defined Jonsonian humours. Kubrick has shown an acute feeling for British types and employed several actors in a diversity of roles. His Donald

McGill-style warder in *A Clockwork Orange*, Michael Bates, created the role of Inspector Truscott in Joe Orton's *Loot*, a part Leonard Rossiter (a prominent figure in *2001* and *Barry Lyndon*) was appearing in at the time of his death four years ago.

The late Patrick Magee, one of Samuel Beckett's favourite actors, appeared in two Kubrick films, A Clockwork Orange and Barry Lyndon. In the former, as an anguished intellectual, his face is distorted by a fish-eye lens into a silent Baconian scream. It is not without significance that ten years earlier, in 1960, Patrick Magee played the senior warder in Joseph Losey's The Criminal, another British film by an American director that uses a prison as a metaphor for society. Looking back, one also notes obvious parallels between Losey's The Damned (shot in 1961 but not released until two years later) and A Clockwork Orange. In Losey's lowbudget film a group of style-conscious teenage gangsters challenge the Establishment and are destroyed by state violence, and there's a scene in which a sculptress is threatened in her studio by a young thug that anticipates the homicidal encounter between Alex and the Cat Lady in A Clockwork Orange.

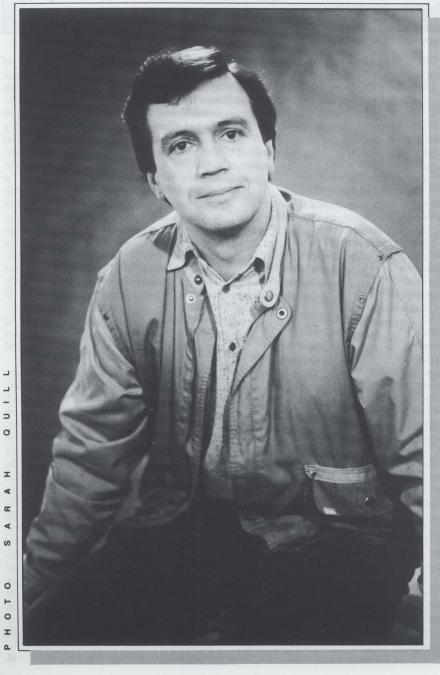
In adapting his own novel, Burgess has retained Alex's direct address to the audience, which leaves the book incompletely dramatised. And he has included scenes and incidents Kubrick dropped from his tightly plotted film. The authorship, for example, of a book called A Clockwork Orange is attributed to the writer, F. Alexander, and the title explained. Alex's second killing, the group murder of an obstreperous convict, is graphically staged, though only to point up the grim confinement of prison life. The central moral is constantly reiterated and underlined.

The main restoration, however, is of the final chapter, which Kubrick was apparently unaware of until his script was nearly completed. 'I never gave any consideration to using it,' he later told Michel Ciment. In Burgess' coda, Alex meets his old droog Pete, now married and settled down. The encounter encourages Alex, still only 18, to speculate on his own future. He envisages a happy suburban life, a contented wife ironing his clothes and preparing his meals in the living room, a little baby boy gurgling in the bedroom. On stage there is no ironic undertone. We are asked to accept this absolutely seriously. A deep sentimentality negates much of what has gone before. The only way Kubrick could have handled it would have been as grim comedy, comparable with the fantasies Alex has of whipping Christ like a Roman soldier in a parodic version of a Hollywood biblical film.

Nothing dates quite so rapidly as our ideas of what the future might be like. But the astonishing thing about both 2001, A Space Odyssey and A Clockwork Orange is the power they still exert. The haircuts, the thick sideburns, the LP records, the absence of computer screens fix the movie in the early 1970s, but they do not tame it. The end of the Burgess-Daniels stage version takes the play back to the British cinema of the era in which the novel originally appeared. Room at the Top, Saturday Night and Sunday Morning and A Kind of Loving all end in exactly that resigned way of settling for a muted life of small, compromised happinesses. That Alex might become a state-employed thug, a wife-beater and child-abuser, is not the sort of notion producers of potentially money-spinning shows wish audiences to take with them out into the night.



L SILIAN



ou will like him, said Naum Kleiman, the curator of the Eisenstein Archive and now administrator of the new Moscow Film Museum. And so we met, in the summer of 1987, in the cramped apartment where Eisenstein's library lines every inch of the walls. Yuri Tsivian was then 37 but looked, as he still does, considerably younger. He is solidly built (a tennis-player), with a fresh boyish face and long unruly hair. He has a quick smile; and a habit of opening his eyes wide and thrusting his head forward out of sheer eagerness to hear all there is to know. He has a slightly hesitant way of talking, in Russian as well as in English, which he speaks with a precision native speakers rarely acquire.

Naum Kleiman was right: I did like him—especially when I learned that he was in Moscow to work on organising the collection of early Russian films in the national archive, Gosfilmofond. As long as I can remember, I had been fascinated by this arcane and misty piece of cinema history, without hope of getting access to any part of it. Yuri revealed that more than 200 films from 1908 to 1917 survived, mostly in beautiful prints and some of them remarkable.

In that case, I proposed, we must get them to Pordenone's Giornate del Cinema Muto, the Mecca of the world of silent cinema. Yuri was gloomy about the prospects. He was fascinated to learn of Pordenone; but it was a world away. At that time he had never left the Soviet Union and it seemed unlikely that he would. In such organisations as the Riga Academy of Sciences, where he worked, only the most senior officials ever got to travel . . .

Things were changing fast, however. Pordenone at once set to work on a project for a major Russian retrospective. Yuri Tsivian, having meanwhile been a driving force in the epochmaking first Riga Festival, was now able to make up for the years of lost travelling time. In 1988 he was in Oxford for the Eisenstein Seminar and at the Pordenone festival. In October 1989 the Russian programme arrived in Pordenone and travelled on to Paris and London, Yuri along with it.

In part, it was perestroika conditions that had made travelling possible; and the collaboration of Gosfilmofond had been vital to the resurrection of the Russian material. Even so, Tsivian insists, none of it would have been possible without the impetus provided by the new Moscow Film Museum, whose principal begetter was the remarkable Naum Kleiman. Kleiman has undoubtedly also been a major inspiration for the Riga Film Museum, which is among Yuri's immediate projects.

Yuri Tsivian, exactly like Eisenstein, was born in Riga, of a Latvian Jewish father and a Russian mother. 'But I am not schizophrenic about it. Riga has always been a multilingual, multinational city.

I was born in 1950, five years after

the Russians recaptured Latvia from the Germans and made it a Soviet Republic. Now follows the picturesque part of the biography. My father is a Latvian Jew. His parents perished in the ghetto, and he is a kid from the ghetto. He escaped from the ghetto and managed to get a false passport, with a Latvian name. He lived in Riga even though everyone knew him—he was eighteen by then. No one denounced him. And then, as a quasi-Latvian, he was taken as a hospital worker to a work camp—not a concentration camp—in Germany.

In time he escaped to Switzerland, where he had a relative. In order to maintain residence there, it was necessary that he committed a minor misdemeanour. The legend is that he simply took a bottle of ink and threw it through a window. Just so that he could be arrested and not given back to the Germans. He graduated at the University of Geneva, went to an interpreters' school and worked for a year as a translator. Finally he was repatriated and became a writer, writing in Latvian.

'Then he met my mother, who was from Leningrad. Her background is also quite adventurous. My grandfather on the Russian side was a leading attorney. So in 1937 he was shot, and my grandmother (who died just last week, at 90) was sent to Siberia with my mother. After the war they came back. She had torn up her passport, and when she applied for a new one she did not tell them she was the widow of an enemy of the people.

'Now the dull part. I was born. I went to a Russian school, being the son of a Russian mother. My family language is Russian, though I also spoke Latvian from my early days, since my father didn't know Russian too well. I think I have an accent in both. Then I studied English and German literature at the Latvian State University in Riga.

'Before that, though, I went to an actors' school for five years. While I was still at school, the Riga film studio decided to start courses for actors, rather than borrowing them from the theatre. This was in 1965. I was accepted for the course, and the five years I spent there was the best time of my life. The only trouble was that they thought I lacked talent: Well, they said, you have a good head and you can learn texts by heart. You should try science or something like that.

I graduated, though, and even played in a couple of films, leading roles. Riga Film Studios is not so famous for features, so they made films for boys or girls, for special audiences. They were medical films. One was about masturbation. That was the first time I got acquainted with Freud. I thought this role should be prepared properly, so I read everything by Freud that was translated into Russian. The other film, I must admit, was about venereal diseases. I was quite young. I did not play the syphilitic. I played the alternative, a happy young guy who is not ill. And

that is where I met my future wife. She played my girlfriend. We married, and we have one son of fourteen. He makes films

'So that is when I switched to film history. I went to Moscow in 1973 to work as a post-graduate. The subject I chose for my thesis was Russian theory before 1917—we call it Russian Film Thought. So I researched in trade papers and documents. It was then a rather precocious subject, but it was never forbidden. My approach was a little paradoxical, too, because my central theme was montage ideas before 1917—in a cinema that virtually dispensed with conventional ideas of montage.'

What was the special appeal of Russian cinema studies? 'I have always been attracted to unknown material. When I started, this was a very unfashionable period; and where cinema is concerned it still is. But I see myself as part of a larger movement in cultural studies. Because there is now an enormous revival of interest in the 1910s, a very important cultural period which has until recently been unappreciated. We were told by Lenin that it was a period of decadence, of no importance. In the 1960s, the 20s were the main focus for cultural historians. But interest has now reverted to the teens.'

There are plans for an English edition of Tsivian's book, prepared under the auspices of the Riga Academy, about the apparatus of cinema and the history of film reception in Russia. 'It consists of three parts. The first is the history of film theatres and of how people in Russia received film-not films, but cinematography-after 1896. So the first part is the infrastructure of reception: film theatres; the architecture of viewing halls; the history of film music in Russia; the history of projection speeds; the behaviour of patrons; the inner, psychological justification for the act of going to films. Because they had to construct a framework for this behaviour, which was completely new to Russia.

'The second part is the reception of film language, and is mainly the way films are reflected in other, traditional arts—in theatre and literature. Also intertitles. The third part is textual analysis of three famous films of the 1920s, October, The Man with the Movie Camera and Ermler's Fragment of an Empire. Overall it covers the whole silent period, from 1896 to 1930.'

The book reflects Tsivian's special contribution to historiography, which is to destroy the traditional notion of a total rupture in cinema tradition after the Revolution of 1917. Tsivian's approach to history emphasises that there was a transitional period between the pre- and post-Revolutionary cinemas, and also a continuity. His paper at the Oxford Eisenstein seminar (the proceedings, edited by Ian Christie and Richard Taylor, are to be published shortly) dealt precisely with the survival of pre-Revolutionary elements, notably Symbolism, in Eisenstein's 'revolutionary' October. 'This was Eisenstein's

background. He was an intelligent, well-educated boy from Riga, who read the Russian Symbolist poets.'

A major influence on Tsivian's method has been the philologist Yuri Lotman. Ian Christie explains: 'Lotman's interests are very catholic, ranging from medieval and renaissance Russian art right through to cinema. He applies the same principles of semiotics to Pushkin or cinema or Russian folk myths. He is a very lively writer, with a circle which meets at his summer schools. Yuri has been a part of this. Lotman's work belongs to the great tradition of Russian philology, which predated semiology; and it is interesting that it has now branched into cinema. What you can see in Yuri's writing is the same structural interest, the same way of organising things, as in Lotman's own writings on Russian culture.'

Yuri Tsivian came to London in January as the British Film Institute's first Visiting Fellow, with carte blanche to choose his study projects. 'For one thing I would like to see films of the early Brighton School . . . And then I have been told that Fedor Otzep's archives are in London. People mostly remember him for The Living Corpse, but for me he is most interesting for his work in the pre-Revolutionary cinema. He was the first to attempt a book about film. There is a plan of it in Aleinikov's archives, which suggests it was something highly original-a very conceptual idea of Russian style and Russian cinema. This was in 1913-14, before Vachell Lindsay. Otzep was sixteen or seventeen at that time, but that was the right age to write the book. After all, he wrote the script of Queen of Spades at

'Later he was head of the literary department of one of the film factories. Then he met Aleinikov and they made a very tight group around Trofimov's Rus company. Among them was Efros, who was a theatre critic writing mainly about the Moscow Art Theatre. Aleinikov was mad about bringing the Art Theatre into films; and Otzep was a part of this. It was one of the ways that Russian films could have gone. So what I hope is that if his archives really do survive in London, there might be some material from the book.'

About his personal taste in films, he regards German's My Friend Ivan Lapshin as one of the best Soviet films. 'Lapshin was underestimated in Europe. And then Paradjanov's The Colour of Pomegranates, of course. And directors? 'Oh, well, John Ford. Not very original. I like Peter Greenaway very much too—I saw his last film in London. Among the early Russians, it would have to be Bauer . . . Though I like Chardynin; I think he is underestimated. London may be the place to discover him.

'Also I would very much like to talk to the widow of Komissarjevsky; she is Dame Peggy Ashcroft . . . '

DAVID ROBINSON

A DEATH IN

When I was a young altar boy, I pored over my tattered copy of the Lives of the Saints and was drawn into the magical but nightmarish world of the martyrs. Tale after religiously edifying tale of defenestration, immolation, castration and condemnation passed before my eyes-some lavishly illustrated-and I became increasingly angry at those who watched these events take place. I had an image of a Roman family out for a day's entertainment with a packed lunch and enthralled or bored by the sight of the ripping and rending of Christian limbs and flesh. How one could be a spectator of human suffering without being moved was incomprehensible. Yet, night after night, while eating my tea in front of the TV, I watched news items in which depiction of horrific death and injury was relatively commonplace.

n lan Christie explains: 'Lot-

These thoughts rumbled around my head recently as I watched some raw news agency footage of a bombing in Sri Lanka. The television monitor seemed to be transformed into a charnel house; limbs were scattered around and flesh, which had melted from bones and was then charred, made the bomb site look like a perverted barbecue. I forced myself to watch and I was nauseated and moved. Half an hour later I was eating a hearty lunch. The ghosts of the images did not live with me.

How to portray death and suffering on television news in a dignified and decent fashion has preoccupied the BBC and ITV for many years. Furthermore, it has become an important issue in the debate surrounding broadcasting standards, and in the development of the Broadcasting Standards Council's code of practice*. Consequently, last year, the Council commissioned a research project about viewers' attitudes to standards in broadcasting which took as a central theme the reporting of disasters. The results of a 1,320-person national survey and of 14 geographically spread discussion groups are outlined below.

In the Inferno, Dante speaks of the passage through hell:

*The Council was established by the Home Secretary in May 1988. It was required to draw up a code of practice on the portrayal of violence, of sex and standards of taste and decency. It also provides a forum for independent research and a focus for audience complaints about programmes.

Now passed we on over the shadows bowed

Beneath the crushing rain, and our feet sat

On seeming bodies that were empty as a cloud.

This image of 'seeming bodies' is an appropriate one for television. The horror we are watching—suspended as it is between *Neighbours* and *Wogan*—has no smell and lacks duration; the bodies have no weight, the blood does not gather around our feet; death becomes integrated into the flow of television images and life goes on.

Julia Kristeva, in her essay on the power of horror, tried to encapsulate the way in which we draw back from putrefaction. 'The corpse (or cadaver: cadere, to fall), that which has irredeemably come a cropper, is cesspool, and death . . . A wound with blood and pus, or the

sickly, acrid smell of sweat, of decay, does not signify death . . . No, as in true theatre, without make-up and masks corpses show me what I permanently thrust aside in order to live.' Rituals which symbolise death also express the continuity of life; however, the problem with corpses or suffering on television is that the medium is dominated by masks and make-up. The viewer is unable to smell decay, to touch the pus; and, equally, is not called upon to rush to the aid of the injured, to bind wounds, to call for an ambulance, to comfort the bereaved. The viewer is required to do no more than watch-helplessly.

Despite the emotional and sensory distance imposed by the medium, viewers do express strong views about the standards of news coverage. They may not smell death, but they are profoundly aware of issues involved in covering



THE HIME

disasters. Audiences respond to the news with confusion, fury, consternation, ambivalence, uncertainty, boredom, distaste, joy, excitement and understanding; the range of responses is as extensive as the scope of reason and sentiment. Although the occasions which produce such powerful reactions may be rare, the emotional impact of the news leads many viewers to reflect on the meaning of these experiences and, subsequently, to engage in complex arguments about the balance between sensitivity and truth-telling in news broadcasts. The background to these arguments is the unique role of television in the home.

In three out of every ten British homes, the early evening news will be watched in a room in which children are present and in which, in many cases, the family will be eating the main meal of the day. This simple, almost humdrum fact is nevertheless the foundation for the strong reactions expressed by viewers about the way in which real-life violence enters into their house. To face a horrified child who asks: 'Why is that man bleeding, Mummy?' requires considerably more courage and insight than most parents feel they are able to muster night after night.

The balance between truth and sensitivity, according to the viewers in this research, should be struck with due regard to the experiences of a 35-year-old mother with two young children sitting next to her on the couch watching television.

Outside Northern Ireland (and even in many places in the Province), relatively few people will experience suffering of the kind brought home night after night on the news. In these days of low infant mortality and longer life expectancy, death is met infrequently and is, for the most part, sanitised by hospitals, funeral parlours, closed caskets and decorous mourning. A young Welsh woman in one of the groups summed up part of the problem: '[When the news comes on] you are eating your tea and you don't want to see things like that when you are eating your tea.'

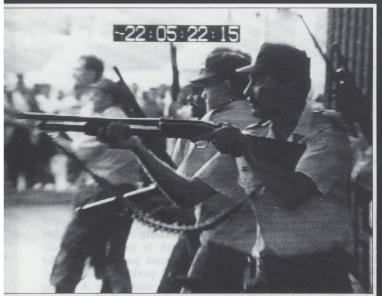
This response could be written off as squeamishness and disregarded in the search for a balance between truth and sensitivity; however, nausea offers a clue to standards. In the last century, a crowd of 40,000 may have bayed for the hanging of a prisoner outside Newgate prison, and no doubt the crowd were the nineteenth-century munching equivalent of popcorn. If television had been around to record the death of Dick Turpin, the event would have gone out in primetime, with the State channel claiming that public hangings were listed events which everyone had a right to see.

Although disgust, revulsion and fear are relative to historical periods and societies, one must understand such responses if broadcasters are to comprehend the emotional reasons for viewers' concerns about news standards.

The meaning of death has been transformed in Northern Europe as the over-arching and relatively coherent religious systems have unravelled. For the majority of people in Britain, organised faith no longer binds heaven to earth; more people are buried in church than ever attended, but vague notions that granddad has gone to a better place cannot take the place of a deep, abiding religious peace about heaven.

religious peace about heaven. In much Christian theology, the body is a husk, a shell, and the spirit or soul is the centre of an individual's being. However, many Christians have, throughout history, been concerned about the treatment of the body in death. Body-snatching, medical experiments and cremation provoked deep concern and, indeed, were criminal. This concern about the body was tempered by the knowledge that the spirit was elsewhere. If this tradition has been fundamentally undermined in Britain, and if the body is all that is left to signify that a person had meaning in







South African policemen firing into the crowd on the day of Nelson Mandela's release. ITN evening news.

the world, then to see it ill-used or roughly handled *in public* and on television is, as people in the groups pointed out, to feel that the person—not the cadaver—has been stripped of his or her dignity.

—It's the shovelling, the disrespect for someone's body. I think that's the sort of thing that would disturb people for a long time and give them nightmares.

-I think that it hurts to see dead bodies being tugged about.

—There's no need to treat a body in such an undignified manner.

Echoes of these attitudes were picked up in the survey in which respondents were offered an imaginary scene of a train crash and invited to choose the way the disaster should be covered by the news. Moreover, viewers were offered the opportunity to reflect on the difference between evening and night-time news bulletins.

Only 2 per cent of people thought that close-up images of dead passengers should be shown before 9 o'clock; and one person in twenty (6 per cent) felt similar pictures of badly injured travellers were acceptable. Furthermore, even after 9 o'clock only 8 per cent thought that close-ups of death or the dead were acceptable. Most people wanted the scene to be described or shown from a distance.

The overwhelming reason for this opinion, offered by seven out of ten (73 per cent) people who rejected detailed pictures of death and injury, was that the relatives of the accident victims would be upset. (Around four in ten noted their concern that children might be watching.)

One young Welsh woman summed up a strong body of opinion expressed in the groups: 'Violence on the news is something adults should know about, but children should be shielded from to a certain extent.' In Fife, one middle-class man cast doubts on the validity of protecting children, only to find himself rebuked and cut-off in mid-sentence by others in his group:

—People will see movies with blood and guts all over, but if you try to put it on the six o'clock news . . .

-But your kids are watching at six o'clock.

—If you were in a war situation and your neighbours got blown up in the road, would you take your kids to watch it? No, you wouldn't.

—I don't believe that we should be subjected to what these people actually have encountered in a real disaster.

There was, among those who took part in the research, a deep concern about children, a fear about the appearance of death in the home, and a deep desire to protect the relations of those who suffered in a tragedy. Moreover, the responses pointed up the cultural paradox that the determined attempt to maintain the sanctity of the dead body on television takes place in a society which is becoming increasingly mundane and secular in its handling of death

The factory-like atmosphere of crematoria, the decline in elaborate funerals and ornate headstones, the feeling that prolonged mourning—common in Victorian Britain—is inappropriate, are evidence of a society which finds it difficult to give meaning to death. However, the powerful and emotional response to the idea of the portrayal of death on the news, and to the camera's rough-handling of the body (which seems almost like desecration) demonstrates that, at the very least, a simple humanist impulse still functions in Britain.

Most viewers do not want stories to be distorted, softened, or hidden from view; they want, instead, the reassurance of editorial good sense. The following quotations from the discussion groups—and many more could be offered—reveal both the quality of the arguments which took place in the groups, and the keen understanding which viewers have of the dilemmas faced by responsible broadcasters.

There was a strong body of opinion in the groups which held that the news was compelled to present strong and potentially distressing pictures. Among a group of young women the following exchange took place.

-It doesn't hit home any more unless they show that amount [of violence].

—It's like in Armenia, you noticed there weren't any pictures and I think I wanted to see what it was like, because you're used to having pictures.

One teenage girl, from another group, commented on a news report:

-I didn't think it was that serious until I saw the torso.

An older working-class woman noted:

—One body in the sanitised version of that report would have been an improvement. To show you how bad it was. It looked like a pile of rubble. You couldn't see there were bodies in it.

Another woman in this group made the profound observation:

—These are people like us causing that suffering, they should show it to us to let us know.

A younger working-class woman, reflecting on the same images, said:

—It makes you ask: 'What point is there in killing all those people?' That's the point of showing the pictures and that's what you have to ask as an editor: was this *human* tragedy shown? Rubble is just rubble.

Finally, an older middle-class woman from Oldham expressed her anxiety that the truth should not be hidden:

—They hid six million Jews dying during the war. It was only when we saw the pictures we realised, so there is a need to show them.

The balance between truth and sensitivity was, however, struck in a different way for terrorist offences, preventable accidents and natural disasters. As to the first, many people believed strongly that showing the horror undermined the terrorists' case;





the second was, though to a lesser extent, justified if it led to prosecution of the guilty or to an increase in public safety; the last was extremely difficult—it created a sense of voyeurism.

In one group, someone noted that the coverage of terrorism evoked 'anger and distaste', whereas the depiction of natural disasters was a type of 'horror making you upset and sad and wishing you could help.' One teenage boy clarified his confusion and his anger; he wanted, he said, to see terrorist acts reported in full, but natural disasters to be handled with great sensitivity. He argued strongly that images of death in Northern Ireland:

—Shock people to hate the IRA. It's the relatives you feel sorry for, but they know that everyone around them would be hating the IRA for it . . .

He continued, however:

—Whereas with a freak accident or a storm . . . there's nobody to get mad at, so you get mad at the people showing the pictures.

Among these arguments about truth, dignity, terrorism, an occasional outburst would take place, aimed at news programmes, and expressing considerable scepticism about the reasons for showing violence and death. Reporters and editors, some people felt, pushed back the boundaries of taste and decency simply in order to gain kudos from their colleagues. If this was the case, then, the complainants thought, news should not be allowed to override the sensitivities of the majority of people in the audience. A group of working-class men from Bristol expressed most clearly their dissent:

−Is it sensationalism or are they trying to get the facts over to you?

—Is it a case of my news is more gruesome than your news? They win awards for it.

Two men in the group summed up the problem:

-It's a double-edged sword. If you show

too much violence people become immune and you can be doing a job for the people committing the violence. But you do need to know there are horrible things about. If you don't see it, you can't react against it.

—It's striking a balance.

The viewing public were anxious not to be subjected to broadcasting which played to a voyeuristic impulse or to an interest in the morbid. Viewers wanted to look the news in the face; they wanted to experience genuine as opposed to milked emotion, and they wanted no complicity in the production of an electronic dance macabre, as witnessed by this young woman's remark: 'When those two Corporals were killed in Northern Ireland they kept showing that again and again. After about the second time I felt—"Well come on, this isn't a soap opera".'

On the scales which balance truth and sensitivity, viewers placed realism and truth telling on one end and on the other the dignity of the dead and injured and a concern about children. To these last two must be added one further weight—the privacy of relatives.

One in five respondents (and almost four in ten people over the age of 65) thought that the news should never interview the relatives of disaster victims. Moreover, six out of ten believed that such an interview would only be acceptable if it was requested by the relative. (In drawing up the list of options we failed to draw a distinction between people asking for an interview and agreeing to be interviewed. There is a clear difference between the two; however, the point stands that the interviewer must be more sensitive to the situation than to stick a microphone in someone's face and ask him to describe his emotions.)

These findings were reflected in the groups.

−I find it awful in the Northern Ireland funerals when they get in close.

—It's an intrusion on grief.

-You don't need to see the camera zooming in on relatives, that's unnecessary.

One Bristol man stated simply:

-Private grief should not be shown. Grief is a very personal experience.

Each time such sentiments were expressed, however, a minority view emerged which supported an override: 'If you don't see horror pictures, if you don't zoom in on the people suffering and what happened is so remote from us, we're not going to identify with it.'

Pressed home to its conclusion, the sense of the overwhelming need to protect the dignity of the dead and the emotions of the relatives is reflected in the feelings of the vast majority of respondents in the survey that funerals should be private, secluded affairs (however, about four people in ten thought that it would be acceptable for television to cover memorial services.)

Perhaps the findings indicate that lack of religious meaning in death has thrown into sharper relief the needs of the living. Or perhaps the refrain that the feelings of the relatives must be protected, even if this means that the nation cannot share in the grief, is a sign of a private, individualistic culture. Whatever the explanation, the evidence of the BSC's research thus far demonstrates that the portrayal of death and of suffering penetrates deep into difficult emotional territory. The public is not emotionally neutral; it tries to keep its voyeurism under control, and it looks to broadcasters in Britain to maintain the standards of respect balanced with realism which have marked out the best of its news coverage over the last forty years.

The discussion groups were conducted in April 1989 by Fusion Research and Consultancy. The national survey took place in June 1989 and was administered by the media group at Research International. The sample was 1,600, response rate 70 per cent. Two quote samples of 100 Asians and 100 Afro-Caribbeans also answered the survey.

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JOHN PYM ON NIGERIA'S FIRST WESTERN FEATURE FILM

Vasco da Gama circled Africa anticlockwise; Western film-makers have gone the other way. Kenya has been graced with Meryl Streep as Karen Blixen, Greta Scacchi as the future Lady Delamere and Sigourney Weaver as Dian Fossey, the gorillas' friend. Until now, however, no independent American producer, let alone a Hollywood studio, has thought to shoot an international feature in Nigeria. 'A couple of months before he died,' the producer Michael Fitzgerald said, 'John Huston mentioned Joyce Cary's novel Mister Johnson. It was something he had always wanted to do, but the opportunity had never arisen because you could not have pictures with black stars. His time was not the time, but, he thought, now was.'

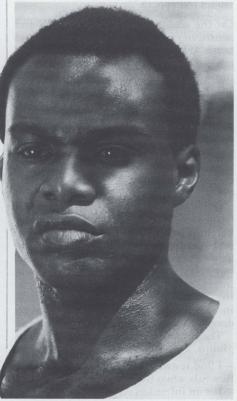
Michael Fitzgerald-son of the poet Robert Fitzgerald whose classical translations included the Odyssey-is not daunted by challenge. Witness his two films with Huston, Wise Blood, from the book by Flannery O'Connor about the dire effects of Southern evangelism, and *Under the Volcano*, a bold simplification of Malcolm Lowry's equally intractable novel. At the time of his conversation with Huston, he had not read Mister Johnson (1939), the vivid, comic story of a young Nigerian clerk who overreaches himself while helping his colonial master, the naive Rudbeck, fulfil an obsessive ambition to build a grandiose road. He soon did, however, and was entranced.

After Under the Volcano (1984), Fitzgerald suffered two bruising experiences. He produced a feature, The Penitent, written and directed by Cliff Osmond, the tall character actor of such Billy Wilder pictures as Kiss Me, Stupid and The Fortune Cookie. The film was shot in Mexico and starred Raul Julia. It was backed by a small company, Vista, with a slate of pictures the financiers of which evaporated. Vista was sold to a video cassette concern. 'They needed product for their summer release,' Fitzgerald said. 'The Penitent was bought in May and two weeks later was on cassette along with seventeen slash-and-burn pictures, though this did not really conform to the standards Vista had set itself.

Cliff Osmond had never directed a film before: it deserved better, but it just got lost?

Fitzgerald spent eighteen months with Orson Welles-a story he detailed in an interview with Richard Trainor, SIGHT AND SOUND (Winter 1984/ 85)-readying a film about Welles' own experiences in the 1937 Broadway production of Marc Blitzstein's play The Cradle Will Rock. 'The uniqueness of the story was that it was something that had happened to Orson when he was a young man. He worked liked a fiend on the script and we got within three weeks of shooting when our financier, a film distributor from Washington, p.c., backed out. Poor Orson, given his reputation and so on which was all horseshit. People blamed it on him again, although no one was more disciplined, harder working, more responsible or so well prepared. The script exists

Maynard Eziashi (Mister Johnson).



and it will never be made. No one could possibly do what Orson had in mind, and for anybody to try would be the height of foolishness.

'Here was Orson, from the vantage point of a lifetime of mixed success, examining a seminal moment in his life. It was the financial success of The Cradle Will Rock which allowed the Mercury Players to become a reality. His conception was not abstract, like the man who did All That Jazz, but: "This is Orson Welles at the age of twenty." He had devised all the magic tricks, everything was built. In an attempt to save the film, there was a big Sunday morning meeting at John Huston's house. My agent, who was the head of ICM, looked our backer in the face and said, "If this picture is in focus, you're going to get your money back.' But the guy panicked and went away. That really put me off the cinema.'

Disappointment, however, comes with the territory, and Fitzgerald was in ebullient mood on a stopover in London in December. The director of Mister Johnson, which went into production near Jos, in Northern Nigeria, in January, is Bruce Beresford, who worked as an editor for the East Nigeria Film Unit for two years in the mid-60s. In America Beresford is riding high at the moment on the success of his latest film, Driving Miss Daisy, a finely judged adaptation of Alfred Uhry's play about a contrary Jewish widow (Jessica Tandy) and the patient, humorous man (Morgan Freeman) whom her frazzled son (Dan Aykroyd) picks out as her chauffeur. The setting is Georgia in the lazy days of segregation, and the tone at times runs perilously close to the sentimental. But Beresford and his players have a sure touch. No one condescends to anyone; and Morgan Freeman, despite what a lesser actor might consider a 'slave' role, pitches his quiet performance exactly right.

The key to *Mister Johnson*, Fitzgerald said, was Chief Hubert Ogunde. 'He is the father of Nigerian theatre. When he walks into a room, people prostrate themselves, and for excellent reasons. He currently has eleven wives, all of

whom are actors, as are many of his countless children. He has at his fingertips thousands of actors, drummers, dancers who are constantly touring all parts of West Africa in troupes supervised by his wives putting on his 80-odd plays. He was incarcerated by the British in the 1940s for writing anticolonial plays. He is known in every hamlet of this nation of 140 million people. Nowhere do you go, however remote, but they don't know him by sight. For 45 years he has travelled the country, and not just there, but in Ghana, the whole of West Africa. And the reason I'm making the picture in Nigeria is Ogunde.'

Chief Ogunde eased the film's preparation, but it was Jean-Louis Rubin, the head of foreign operations at 20th Century Fox and a friend of Fitzgerald nasty streak; Mister Johnson, on the other hand, is devoid of 'racism'. There has, however, had to be a certain judicious softening. 'Rudbeck's wife Celia, Beatie Edney, for instance, no longer refers to Johnson as "Mr Wog"."

The film's language was a problem. Cary wrote in pidgin, when Nigerian addressed Englishman, and in standard English when the Nigerians spoke among themselves. Boyd, after some debate, opted for pidgin, the Nigerian lingua franca, and Hausa, which will be subtitled. The book, perhaps Cary's masterpiece, ends with the quaking Johnson about to be hanged for murder; his spirits soar, however, when he realises that his mentor Rudbeck is about to perform an act of friendship and despatch him with a rifleshot. What were Rudbeck's motives,' Boyd asked. 'He

picture to Nigeria and shows Nigeria to the world. He's full of ambition. He loved the novel because everyone in Nigeria is like Mr Johnson. The difference between American blacks and African blacks is so total that American blacks who go to Africa are taken aback. Richard Pryor returned from Africa and made a remark on a talkshow that I thought apropos. He was shocked, he said, shocked that there were no niggers in Africa. The identity is so totally there, nobody's got a chip on his shoulder, why should he? In Mr Johnson they see what we would see in Falstaff. They see a great comic figure who is as familiar as a concierge in Paris.'

Chief Ogunde is not a complete stranger to films, having made at least five feature-length pictures himself. 'He has hired English crews,' Fitzgerald said. 'Nobody has made a feature film in Nigeria but him and he distributes them himself, with trucks and a projector. I have sat in the open air in his compound in Southern Nigeria in the middle of the night with the mosquitoes and cicadas watching these astonishing rituals unfold for two or three hours. They follow rigid mythical lines that anyone, however uneducated, understands perfectly. Ogunde, however, had to explain them to me-the various areas between heaven and earth and hell...They are subtitled in English because you need a common denominator in a country of so many languages. They are the most popular thing in Nigeria.'

The cast? Edward Woodward, Beresford's Breaker Morant, plays Sargy Gollup, the luckless, larger-than-life murder victim; Pierce Brosnan district officer Rudbeck; and Denis Quilley his older superior. Chief Ogunde himself will, of course, appear; but the part of Mr Johnson is being filled by an English Nigerian, Maynard Eziashi, whose first film this is. 'He has the sort of face,' Fitzgerald said, 'in which everything can be immediately read.' The cameraman is the Australian Peter James

The town of Fada ('our set anywhere else in the world would have cost our entire budget') has been built on a temperate plateau at a height of some 4,500ft. 'We cast all the Nigerian parts in four hours. The casting lady went round and saw thousands of people and came up with maybe 150. We turned up in Jos and magically the 150 turned up as well. Now if you know anything about transport in Nigeria, how these boys and girls got to us, by whatever means, is a complete mystery. I didn't ask. After the casting-they were all wonderful-we were treated to the national dance troupe, which is of course run by Ogunde. 78 dancers came up from Lagos. In the parking lot of the hotel they greeted Bruce and me with exactly the sort of dances we shall have in the film. And Johnson, of course, has big parties, big beer parties...' What, one wonders, would Joyce Cary have thought.



Edward Woodward and director Bruce Beresford. Photographs, Keith Hamshere.

since the company picked up Under the Volcano, who ensured the first, key commitment of American money for all foreign and foreign TV rights. Warners followed suit with the purchase of the foreign video rights. Fitzgerald then danced a frustrating minuet with Hemdale, before a Los Angeles company, Avenue Entertainment, bought the North American rights. The budget is 'under \$7m'; the production home-based

at Shepperton.

The scriptwriter is the novelist William Boyd. Fitzgerald telephoned him from America after reading his introduction to the Penguin Modern Classic edition of Mister Johnson. 'I declined the assignment,' Boyd said, 'but then Fitzgerald said he was flying to London to persuade me...' Boyd, who was born in Ghana in 1952 and spent his childhood and teens there and in Nigeria, clearly remembers a Nativity play by an Ogunde concert party. Cary, in a book such as The African Witch, Boyd maintains, displayed something of a

intervened, in Cary's phrase in another context, because he saw something about to happen which was "repugnant to British standards of decency and justice"

Boyd, who aims to have a new novel complete by the spring, has recently adapted what may in a few years be another modern classic, Mario Vargas Llosa's autobiographical novel Aunt Julia and the Scriptwriter. Originally set in Lima, the action was transferred to New Orleans. Peter Falk, Barbara Hershey and Keanu Reeves star; and Jon Amiel (The Singing Detective) directs. 'We are hoping for Cannes,' Boyd said. There are also plans later this year for a film version of Boyd's novel A Good Man in Africa, to be directed by Malcolm Mowbray (A Private Function) and shot in Gambia.

'The Nigerian film industry is still at 5 o'clock in the morning,' Fitzgerald said. 'Chief Ogunde wants to be the person who brings the first international



ARE YOU INGIFUN

JONATHAN ROSENBAUM ON A SINGLE MOVIE CULTURE, BOMBS, TURKEYS AND ENTERTAINMENT AS OPPRESSION

Scoundrels and lunatics

The conviction that our world is being run and destroyed by scoundrels and/or lunatics, combined with a feeling of helplessness about any possibility of changing this, can be found in at least three of the most popular recent American movies—a mainstream fantasyadventure (Batman), an art-house picture (Crimes and Misdemeanors) and a radical leftist documentary (Roger & Me). Oddly enough, the implication of the responses to these films is that if they were any less pessimistic and defeatist, they'd also be less entertaining.

Wittingly or not, all three movies derive much of their entertainment value from a form of cruelty and black humour that largely depends on a frustrated nerd hero—Bruce Wayne/Batman (Michael Keaton) in Batman, a 'serious', unsuccessful documentary film-maker named Cliff Stern (Woody Allen) in Crimes and Misdemeanors, and the director Michael Moore himself in Roger & Me—who is less a target of ridicule than a conduit by which ridicule can be deflected on to other victims or stooges. All three movies also have a powerful of unemployed with in Flint, Michig. Dave Kehr, fi Tribune, has poi to the same sor can be found in universe of Bat the battles between the b

amoral villain who elicits an uneasy envy and/or admiration: Jack Nicholson's Jack Napier/Joker in *Batman*, Alan Alda's TV producer in *Crimes and Misdemeanors*, and Roger Smith, the dry and elusive chairman of General Motors, in *Roger & Me*.

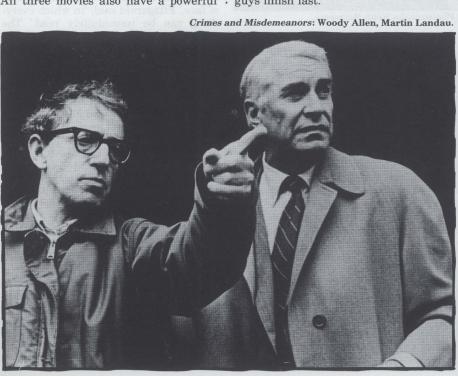
Some of the cruelty can be felt in the unusually loud laughter in cinemas that greets the Joker's 'artistic' murders and media crimes, the account by Cliff Stern's sister of her humiliation by a sadistic pervert whom she met through a classified ad (and Stern's horrified responses, which are telegraphed to the audience as gaglines), and the eviction of unemployed workers from their homes in Flint, Michigan, on Christmas Eve.

Dave Kehr, film critic of the *Chicago Tribune*, has pointedly referred to *Roger & Me* as the first feel-good atrocity film; but the same sort of pleasure and delight can be found in savouring the infested universe of *Batman*, characterised by the battles between a neurotic and a psychotic in a post-apocalyptic Gotham City, and *Crimes and Misdemeanors*, where crime pays, philosophers with faith in love commit suicide and nice guys finish last

The entertainment quotient of these films is in fact so similar that it may be misleading to give them the genre labels I've selected. One might equally call Batman an expensive art film, Crimes and Misdemeanors a tragi-comic soap opera, and Roger & Me a sour sit-com: many of the former divisions separating the mainstream from any kind of counter-culture are effectively wiped out by this new sort of be-all and end-all movie. We seem to be transfixed by a single movie culture now, and it's a chilling one to contemplate.

Ironically, *Batman* is the only one of the three to own up to its own perversity—the fact that one winds up preferring the creativity and vitality of

Batman: Michael Keaton.





Jack/Joker, a virtual blood-brother to: Alex in A Clockwork Orange, to the humourless, iconographic rigidity of Bruce/Batman, who turns out to be as charismatic as J. Edgar Hooveralthough it also happens to be the only one of the three in which the forces of 'good' triumph. The other two postulate a contemporary moral crisis in the way that we live and think, but without investing the victims of this crisis—the murdered mistress (Anjelica Huston) of an ophthalmologist in Crimes and Misdemeanors; the unemployed and evicted ex-auto-workers in Roger & Me-with the roundness and humanity that would make them something more than abstractions. If anyone appeals to the audience's heart, it is the actors/filmmakers Allen and Moore, ineffectual sad sacks who serve as witnesses and spokespeople for the audience's self-satisfied despair.

The fact that Michael Moore's vantage point is strictly that of the disaffiliated working class, while Allen's is no less strictly that of the comfortable white bourgeoisie, certainly deserves mention, as does the fact that both films, unlike *Batman*, launch attacks on the ruthlessness of the rich (and, in Moore's case, a particularly stinging one). But when it comes to audience responses, uppermiddle-class viewers feel rewarded and enlightened rather than challenged or threatened by *Crimes and Misdemeanors*, which attacks self-interest without being able to see beyond it, and

threatened by Crimes and Misdemeanors, which attacks self-interest without being able to see beyond it, and

yuppie viewers find little trouble laughing at their counterparts in Roger & Me.

The polemical aspects of these films may not be entirely neutralised by their success as entertainments. There is something irreducible about the anger in *Roger & Me*—to my mind the most serious *and* the most entertaining film of the lot—which no amount of laughter can wash away. But these polemics are nevertheless mitigated and complicated by spectators who find the very notion of moral bankruptcy enjoyable.

'Entertainment news'

A front-page story in the 24 August 1988 Variety began: 'Last week's Republican National Convention'—the one which nominated George Bush as presidential candidate—'garnered the worst network ratings of any convention in TV history.' It added that both the summer's political conventions boosted video rentals by 30 to 50 per cent.

Should we interpret this as an opting for entertainment over news coverage, or as a preference for one kind of entertainment over another? Do we read it as a sign of desperate cynicism or healthy liberation? And if the latter, was it liberation only from the routine network shows that the conventions were preempting? By normal standards, it degrades a presidential campaign—but validates a movie—to regard it simply as entertainment. With showbiz equally operative and pertinent in both spheres, however, we do ourselves a disservice by making these hard distinctions.

As American movies and political candidates get progressively worse, the talent for marketing them steadily increases. Yet on the whole, the promotion of movies has been more successful than the promotion of politicians. In its current state-of-the-art phase, it consists not only of luring people into cinemas, but of convincing them afterwards that the experience was worthwhile. This has

been facilitated over the past several years by the media's willingness to furnish 'big' releases with unprecedented free advertising to bolster the studios' own lavish campaigns. On one TV network, CBS, the evening news is followed five nights a week by 'entertainment news' of the same length (Entertainment Tonight) which is chiefly devoted to hawking these releases, and on a sixth night by two media personalities reviewing them.

Major cable channels which claim to be free of commercials now routinely run free trailers and/or diverse promotional features for the same pictures, and the most popular newspapers and magazines generally follow suit. Very occasionally an attempt is made to follow the procedures of honest journalism rather than simple promotion. But in effect all the bought and unbought media attention yields the same result-the ironclad certainty that only a few titles, the same ones being pushed through almost every channel at once, can impinge on one's consciousness at any given moment. Thus the ordinary spectator, who innocently assumes that there is no essential difference between publicity and criticism, usually turns out to be

The final arbiter in this process, after all, is not the critic but the weekly boxoffice charts, which have gone beyond their original (debatable) function as popularity polls and are now more like weather reports. The 'canny' reviewer is often the one most adept at predicting the weather. Some of the movies being promoted like this turn out to be boosting other products as well: Back to the Future Part II, for instance, which can already be regarded as a commercial for its predecessor—at least until it reaches its climax, which is a trailer for Part III-is also roomy enough to accommodate numerous other product plugs; and when it is released on video, one would not be surprised to find it preceded by

Roger & Me: Michael Moore (right) filming in Flint, Michigan.



more ads and/or trailers. Given the success of that picture and *Batman*, with its own warehouse of ancillary products, it's beginning to seem that whatever sells most sells best.

Serious money

One reason entertainment is treated more respectfully in our culture than art may be because it has more to do with making money. The general view of this phenomenon is even a bit tautological: if a movie makes a lot of money, it must be entertaining. And because participation in the money-making process is seen as a serious, responsible communal activity, even if one participates only as a consumer, the Puritan work ethic has somehow gotten turned around in our minds to form a kind of imperative about entertainment: it is our duty to be entertained and thereby contribute to the money-making process. (Moviegoing may be a minor form of escape from making money, but it's an excusable one if the movie is a box-office hit, which means that at least someone is making money from it, thanks to our participation.) Art, by contrast, is seen as a kind of rarified luxury-unless it also happens to bring in large sums of money, when it can at least aspire to the seriousness of entertainment.

Au Revoir les Auteurs

Perhaps the division set up between the central 'art entertainment and art is misleading. There was a time, after all, in the ascension of second were associated mainly with foreign-language pictures. The revolution in taste brought about by the auteurism of Andrew Sarris in the us and by Movie any serious was in Britain argued that entertaining artistic figures.

directors such as Hawks and Hitchcock were every bit as artistic as Bergman and Fellini, and that automatically associating artistic intention with subtitles was a form of snobbery.

By the time this new taste took hold on the level of film production and promotion, it was less beneficial to the old-style auteurs, who had got their way artistically chiefly through subterfuge, than it was to the new generation of 'movie brats', Bogdanovich, Coppola, De Palma, Scorsese and Spielberg, who were suddenly bestowed with the honours and credentials of authorship and artistic intention that had largely been denied their predecessors. Most were ironically praised less for their originality than for the degrees to which they emulated their masters: the Fordian and Hawksian aspects of Bogdanovich, the Hitchcockian derivations of De Palma, the traits of Disney and DeMille in Spielberg. The same held for other American auteurs who depended more on European models: Woody Allen's reliance on Bergman and Fellini and Michael Cimino's borrowings from Visconti were their principal calling-cards as 'art' directors.

The overall consequence was a gradual phasing out of the major figures of Hollywood and elsewhere—not only Hawks, Hitchcock and Ford, but also Bergman, Antonioni and Godard—as the central 'artistic' presences in mainstream consciousness, and the gradual ascension of such popular figures as Spielberg and Allen to take their place. Lost in this process was any pronounced sense that the leading artistic figures offered a kind of cinema which was in any serious way an alternative to less artistic figures.

Significantly, Roger Ebert recently selected both Mississippi Burning and Do the Right Thing as two of the ten best movies released in the 80s, implicitly giving the same sort of value to a studio picture with stars which postulates the FBI (represented by two white stars) as the progressive spearhead of the Civil Rights movement, and an independent production which accords the same position to Martin Luther King and Malcolm X (while pointedly making use of no heroes in its plot). The same levelling takes place when one considers the press treatment of Spielberg's The Color Purple and Empire of the Sun, both regarded as 'art films' and hence somehow more comparable to Passion or Shoah than to Song of the South, The Longest Day or E.T. (By contrast, it might be argued that Spielberg's Always is now being taken correctly for precisely what it isa failed, personal commercial picture.)

Some readers may feel I'm exaggerating the turnaround, but consider the evidence. Last summer, at a seminar on American independent cinema held in Lisbon, Richard Peña, Jon Jost and I were asked by several Portuguese participants why Spielberg wasn't regarded as an American independent. A look at what was then playing in Lisbon—exclusively American and English movies, apart from Au Revoir les Enfants and Women on the Verge of a Nervous Breakdown, with no Portuguese films in sight—helped to explain why such a question could be asked.

Cowboys and Indians

Some healthy confusion about what constitutes entertainment was aroused by the appearance last summer of *Do the Right Thing*—a film that committed the

Entertainment: Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade: Harrison Ford.





commercial impropriety of seeing nothing incompatible about entertaining an audience while encouraging it to think. On the whole, audiences seemed to respond pretty well to this invitation, while critics and other professionals had more trouble with it. The film served as an excellent ideological Rorschach test on prevailing assumptions about racism. Critics who accused it of espousing violence, for instance, invariably seemed to mean by 'violence' the destruction of white property, not the killing of a black by policemen which set it off.

The absence of any central character, much less a hero or villain, was so confusing to such experts as Wim Wenders on the Cannes jury and Murray Kempton in the New York Review of Books that they had to set up Spike Lee's highly ambiguous Mookie as the hero in order to criticise the movie for postulating the wrong kind of hero. The implication is that we've been saddled for so long with the either/or paradigm of cowboys and Indians, good guys and bad guys, that when a popular film-maker has the courage and insight to do without them for a change, jaded viewers will none the less persist in reinstating them.

In place of either/or, Lee gives us both/and—epitomised by the two quotations that close the movie from Martin Luther King (condemning violence) and Malcolm X (describing situations where violence may be necessary). Several critics have suggested that Lee's refusal to choose between them reveals only confusion, but this argument chiefly demonstrates how reductive either/or reasoning usually turns out to be. The film's final image is a photograph of King and Malcolm X in friendly accord; and if the past of the Civil Rights movement

teaches one anything about its future, then surely this future has a sizable stake in the legacies of both men. To view those legacies as complementary rather than oppositional is part of what Spike Lee's project is about.

Real pleasure

A related misreading took place with the American release of Terence Davies' Distant Voices, Still Lives-once again because of calcified notions about what movie entertainment is supposed to be. Most art films scare away large audiences by their intellectual content or their exotic subject matter, but this masterpiece had neither. It was probably the relative absence of plot—the ne plus ultra of commercial film-making-that deprived the movie of the larger audience it could and should have had, even if this absence permits a wholeness and an intensity to every moment that is virtually inaccessible to narrative filmmaking.

The fact that violence and emotional pain form part of this intensity led some critics to confuse this part with the whole and conclude that the film was a 'downer'; even worse, some evoked the spectre of pretension and *rigor artis* (Agee's phrase). These responses overlooked the fact that an extraordinary amount of the film was devoted to people *enjoying* themselves, above all by singing in communal get-togethers.

Given the received wisdom about how much 'fun' Hollywood entertainments are supposed to be—and conversely, how dreary (if vaguely edifying) films like Davies' are supposed to be—it's amazing how little real, sustained pleasure is enjoyed by characters in the box-office hits, and how much we're allowed to see

and share with Davies' people; how much, in fact, we're allowed to luxuriate in their fleeting yet ecstatic happiness. The sheer physicality and empowerment of their songs, their laughter, their smiles and even on occasion their tears make one feel grateful to be alive; by contrast, even some of the more exciting moments in *Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade*, *Batman* and *Back to the Future II*—those moments that are supposed to add up to sheer 'entertainment'—make one feel like an invalid on sedation getting periodic jolts of electroshock.

Real pleasure II

The French are fond of using the word 'pleasure' a little like the way we use 'entertainment'. One advantage to 'pleasure' is that it implies commitment rather than distraction, and doesn't create an implied pejorative distinction between art (serious) and entertainment (non-serious). When entertainment is defined as a form of relaxation, the implication is that the absence of excitement or passionate feeling is as important to the experience as an absence of thought.

Would it be acceptable to assert that I happen to find *Shoah*, a 503-minute nonfiction investigation into the Holocaust, 'entertaining'? I certainly don't mean to imply by this that it isn't full of pain and sorrow. And it certainly compels one to think; as a complex statement that stages a dialectical encounter between existentialism and Judaism, the present and the past, it obliges us to reflect on the Holocaust in a way that many of us have never done before.

But it's only the use of 'entertainment' in our vocabulary as a puritanical censoring device that arbitrarily isolates

Pleasure: Distant Voices, Still Lives.

Entertainment: Back to the Future Part II: Michael J. Fox.







Ishtar: Dustin Hoffman and Warren Beatty.

the experience of *Shoah* from the experience of being entertained at the movies. After all, *Shoah* is a more concentrated, extended and serious version of what we are asked to think about in a 'pure' movie such as *Judgment at Nuremberg*. Why should the fact that Claude Lanzmann performs this task infinitely better than Stanley Kramer, without the benefit of Judy Garland, deprive us of the validating term 'entertainment'?

Thanksgiving

Once upon a time, a turkey was a bad film and a bomb was a film that lost money. Even as recently as 1985, when Harry and Michael Medved's Son of Golden Turkey Awards appeared, calling a movie a turkey was still a matter of taste and opinion. But late last year, a press release from James Monaco's Baseline ('the entertainment industry's information service,' New York and Beverly Hills) about the 'top ten turkeys of the 80s' suggests that taste and opinion have finally given way to the bottom line, at least where turkeys are concerned.

Estimating budgets, rentals and losses in separate columns, Baseline lists, in descending order:

- 1. Inchon
- 2. The Adventures of Baron Munchausen
- 3. Ishtar
- 4. Heaven's Gate
- 5. The Cotton Club
- 6. Pirates
- 7. Rambo III
- 8. Santa Claus
- 9. Lion of the Desert
- 10. Empire of the Sun
- 11. Once Upon a Time in America

To give some sense of the overall range, No 1 lost \$44.1m, while No 11 lost \$27.5m; at least if Baseline's arithmetic (which equates eleven turkeys with ten) is reliable.

What conclusions, if any, are we to draw from this? Out of the seven that I have seen, three (Nos 2, 3 and 11) are among my favourite films of the 80s, and I know critics who would include Nos 4,

5 and 10 on their own lists. None of these comes close to qualifying as the worst movies of the decade, although I suspect that is exactly how some Baseline subscribers will interpret the list (the same ones, in fact, who equate bombs with turkeys).

Reflecting on the widespread critical disapproval of Nos 2 and 3, I believe it could be argued that the expectation that they would lose a fortune had a lot to do with their repudiation. It's rather as if many critics chose to identify with investors rather than with characters or film-makers. Elaine May, in particular, seemed to get lost in much of the negative hyperbole surrounding Ishtar, so that almost no one saw fit to relate it to her three previous features. The configuration made by all four is strikingly coherent: two films about betrayed marriages, A New Leaf and The Heartbreak Kid, followed by two about betrayed friendships, Mikey and Nicky and Ishtar, the first and last concluding with reconciliations

And it appears that the most audacious and timely aspect of *Ishtar*—the Reaganite equation of entertainment and politics, with particular reference to American idiocy in blundering through the Third World and climaxed by a showbiz agent negotiating a peace settlement as part of an entertainment deal—was overlooked entirely. In the us, at least, most critics bemoaned *Ishtar*'s failure to live up to the fun and games of the Hope and Crosby *Road* pictures, and, no doubt less consciously, to the colonial and imperial confidence that these fun and games exuded.

Back in the 20s, Erich von Stroheim was made a popular hero (and subsequent martyr) in some quarters for his indifference to budgets. In the 80s, Elaine May and Terry Gilliam mainly get their knuckles rapped in the same (or equivalent) quarters. And while Gilliam—unlike May—reaches for some of the same sort of validation that was once accorded Stroheim by the intelligentsia, there's apparently a good deal less of it these days to go around. The

contemporary synonym for 'martyr' is 'loser'.

Yet ironically, it is May who offers the strongest parallels to Stroheim—temperamentally, thematically and stylistically. There is a similar compulsion for retakes, a similar taste for casting against type (ZaSu Pitts in *Greed*, Beatty and Hoffman in *Ishtar*), a similar perverse appreciation of scoundrels and hypocrites (the men we love to hate) and a similar obsession with innocence and corruption, as well as power, money and influence.

Both film-makers lavish attention, affection and even passion on their most irreclaimable characters, and balance pitiless long shots (friends squabbling in the deserts of Greed and Ishtar) with pitying closer shots charged with tenderness and pathos (Gibson Gowland at the beginning of Greed, Peter Falk at the end of Mikey and Nicky). If A New Leaf is May's Blind Husbands, The Heartbreak Kid her Foolish Wives and Mikey and Nicky her Greed, Ishtar is surely her Merry Widow-a blockbuster with superstars set in a mythical country that attempts to subvert its genre from within. The Merry Widow, one should recall, reaped a handsome profit in the 20s. But viewed from the bottom line, few of Stroheim's or May's special qualities won any extra points in the 80s.

Entertainment usually implies that only one part of the brain is being used. Secretly, I suspect, all of us would rather be enraptured than diverted, and shaken up rather than soothed; but supposedly, goes the received wisdom, there's something 'safer' about mild diversion—even if in so many films it becomes a bludgeoning form of oppression. But to reduce our possibilities to a distorted series of either/or propositions, which producers, distributors, exhibitors, reviewers and audiences seem to be doing in increasing numbers-art or entertainment, entertainment or edification, artistic (hit) or economic (turkey)—is to limit our capacity to experience any of

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FILM FINANCE IN THE AGE OF HYPERINFLATION

Brazil has always beckoned to madmen with loony schemes. If they weren't building an opera house in the middle of the Amazon rain forest, they were laying a railroad to it from the coast. When their projects finally came to fruition—thousands of lives and millions of dollars later—they were usually obsolete. The Brazilian cinema continues to exercise the same sort of fatal attraction today: as the rest of the country moves toward free market economics and away from protectionism, Brazil's film industry still pursues its penchant for central planning.

In an effort to boost national production, for example, the country's state film board, Concine, in 1978 established a 'market reserve': theatre owners are requested to show Brazilian films on one hundred and forty days a year. But since the country usually produces fewer than fifty films annually, many of them not of commercial quality, exhibitors have simply ignored the quota while Concine turned a blind eye. Exhibitors must likewise show a Brazilian short film before each foreign feature. Thus, while waiting to see, say, Bambi, you might have to sit through a short about the sexual inclinations of nineteenth-century painters in North East Brazil. On the eve of the election of Brazil's new centre-right liberal president, Roberto Farias, the vice-president of Concine, declared that in 1990 Brazil's feature film production must double. One would have thought he was speaking of the Soviet wheat crop during the time of Stalin.

Last year, Brazil had its first democratic presidential election in 29 years. The country was at a crossroads: the world's eighth largest industrial nation could pursue the path towards modern liberal democracy, or one towards the status of leading Third World power. Brazilians elected Ferdinand Collor de Mello as their new president. Collor's supporters claimed that by backing his programme of privatisation, reduced protectionism and government spending, Brazil chose the former. It is ironic that the electorate also revealed their faith-for better or worse-in the moving image.

It is not for nothing that Collor is known for being telegenic: he was the candidate advocated by Brazil's influential and conservative Globo television network. His family also has extensive business interests in newspapers and television; in fact, their broadcasting franchise forms one of Globo's regional tentacles. Because of his penchant for the media, he is even known as 'the video clip president'. One of the myths surrounding Collor is that he decided to launch his bid after reading The Selling of the President, a book about Richard Nixon's successful 1968 campaign. In his brief political career, Collor has changed parties four times, moving from the military right to what he defines as libertarian centre. He's also a former karate champion. For all these reasons, Collor's victory is viewed both in Brazil and abroad as encouraging and disheartening at once.

A key element in his platform was the reduction of Brazil's \$110 billion foreign debt, the largest in the Third World. Collor wishes to encourage

'The banks don't need the film industry here, but the film industry needs the banks'

foreign creditors to swap their debt titles for shares in Brazilian companies, and to renegotiate the debt to limit service payments. Debt-equity swap is an idea that long precedes Collor; however, under his presidency, the programme may have wider application than had been thought possible. Briefly, an overseas investor purchases part of Brazil's huge foreign debt at a discounted rate-say, \$10 million worth of local currency for \$5 million. The only restrictions are that he has to spend the money in Brazil and that he cannot remit any profits from the investment for twelve years. An investor can execute this transaction through Brazil's central bank, resulting in a cancellation of a company's foreign debt. Or he can execute it 'informally', which essentially amounts to a currency exchange at a discounted rate.

'Over the years, we have converted \$6 billion of foreign debt into investment in Brazil through this programme of debt-equity swap or foreign debt conversion,' Farias claims. 'I think that in the cinema, there are many possibilities in this area.' Through the formal central

bank arrangement. Farias suggests. foreign investors could build a studio or a cinema. Through the informal scenario, production budgets could be reduced and 'a greater degree of sophistication bought for less money.' The overseas company would retain distribution and sales rights to the film outside Brazil (or Latin America), as a way of getting its money back without waiting twelve years to repatriate its earnings. The stiff restriction on profit remittance for foreign companies in Brazil has also been perceived as a possible channel for investment in the Brazilian cinema. Companies with socalled 'blocked funds' would invest them in films: they would receive a tax break and recoup their investment before the twelve-year limit through non-Brazilian sales and distribution. If these programmes have worked for mine-digging and bridge-building, Farias asks, why not for the cinema?

There are several reasons. To begin with, a Brazilian film is perceived as a less surefire investment than, say, a Brazilian luxury hotel. 'It's a high-risk industry in a high-risk country,' says one merchant banker. 'The banks don't need the film industry here, but the film industry certainly needs the banks.' Nor is Brazil's economic climate the most inviting: inflation is in excess of 50 per cent a month; as much as 40 per cent of the country's economic activity goes unrecorded because of tax evasion. Psychologically, investors outside the country are not used to dealing with explosive numbers like these.

Until now, one of the principal attractions of the debt-equity swap has been Brazil's currency restrictions; however, the parallel economy that has existed because of the black-market dollar (double the official rate) is beginning to disappear. Last year, the government created a 'tourist dollar' of nearly the same value. This means that investors in the debt-swap programme now wish to see better than a 2-1 gain on their investment. And no one wants local currency anyway: contracts are usually made in dollars, or in terms of a national treasury bond that serves as a unit of measure, corrected for inflation. And as for blocked funds, says Steve Solot of the Motion Picture Association of America in Rio, 'Everyone thinks that the 40 per cent of your revenues

you can't remit are simply sitting here doing nothing. That's not true. That 40 per cent is all used for local expenses

and operating costs.'

Rampant inflation is likewise a big foe of the economic development of Brazilian cinema. The price of a cinema ticket, for example, is just less than one dollar. Although that is six times less than the cost of a movie ticket in France, distribution expenses are more or less the same. Producers in Brazil would like to see cinema admission charges at least doubled. But it has been pointed out that the cinema is already a middle-class leisure activity: the same 10 million people make up nearly all the 120 million annual admissions-a hefty average of nearly 12 cinema visits a year for the Brazilian moviegoer. Viewed on an urban per basis, however, Brazilian capita cinema-going amounts to far less than one film a year per head.

It is not surprising, then, that in a country where the average monthly salary is between \$50-60, television—specifically commercial television—is a popular lower-class leisure activity as well as a highly developed industry.

Meanwhile, there is no creative or financial cross-fertilisation between cinema and television in Brazil as there is, say, in France or Britain: the country's powerful, self-sufficient private television networks produce their own material or rely on imported, mostly American, programmes to fill airtime.

Embrafilme signed an agreement with Spanish TV to co-produce I I features and two television series

No matter how you cut it, there simply isn't enough money in Brazil to make enough motion pictures. The Brazilian state has been able to pull out a bit from the country's film industry since the creation of a tax shelter for money spent on culture. But private investment still hasn't filled the gap. The state, through its production and distribution organisation Embrafilme, remains the biggest motion picture producer, backing eleven films last year, one quarter of the total national output.

Like the elaborate system of currency control which, critics argue, fuels inflation even as it keeps the country's economy going, state support for film production has kept the film industry on a paternalist chain even as it has permitted Brazilian film-makers to exercise their craft.

It is for these reasons that Brazilian producers have begun to look abroad for funding through co-finance and co-production deals with foreign partners. The decision corresponds to that of producers in West European countries, who have also lost control of their domestic markets: create a 'new cinema' on an ambitious international commercial footing—with motion pictures often shot

in English.

'National markets around the world are now unable to cover spiralling production costs,' Farias says. 'Following a recent agreement, co-productions with Brazil can include partners in up to five countries-the limit used to be two. We are also planning to "nationalise" films made by the other Latin American countries: for example, an Argentine or Mexican film would qualify as Brazilian for purposes of the market reserve.' The creation of a Latin American (or Ibero-Latino) 'common market'—at least for the cinema-is an idea of long standing intended to lead Brazil into the international arena with the mutual support of other Latin American countries.

Embrafilme, for example, has signed an agreement with Spanish TV to coproduce eleven features and two TV series. Other international co-productions in which Brazil is a partner include Mika Kaurismäki's Amazones and a co-production with Italy about the traditional dance lambada. Producer Luis Carlos Barretto, patriarch of Brazil's 'first family' of the cinema, is one notable advocate of co-productions, especially with European TV networks. His son Bruno is currently seeking partners for an English-language picture about the kidnapping of an American ambassador, to be filmed in Brazil with American actors. He, too, has produced a television programme on lambada. Barretto's other son, Fabio, is directing a mini-series about Italian emigration to Brazil with Italian television. The most ambitious film projects that Brazil has taken part in are Paul Mazursky's Moon Over Parador, John Boorman's Emerald Forest and Zalman King's Wild Orchid-all big budget productions by us 'major' companies which used debt-equity conversion in different ways and to different degrees.

Critics of the Brazilian film industry's new international outlook argue that the intervention of foreign capital has historically led to disaster. The adventures of French 'major' Gaumont in Brazil, they say, ended unhappily in 1985 after many years of activity in production, distribution and exhibition, which enriched the French company but did little for the Brazilian industry. In fact, Gaumont's participation in Brazilian production was limited to a minority role in a handful of films like *Xica*

Made in Brazil: John Boorman's The Emerald Forest.





Brazil's most expensive recent production: Ruy Guerra's Kuarup.

da Silva, Bye Bye Brasil, Quilombo and Memorias de Carcere. According to Brazilian critics, these films were actually a setback for the national cinema after the advances of the cinema novo of the 1960s, which sought to rid the Brazilian film industry of its obsession with 'international quality', perceived locally as an example of ideological colonisation.

According to Brazilian producers, the harsh terms of co-production deals with Gaumont distributed risk unequally and inflated their budgets. However, foreign domination has made itself felt most clearly at the level of distribution. While Brazilian music, for example, continues to hold its own at the top of the Brazilian (and international) charts, Brazilian films garner only 15 per cent of the country's box office. Critics attribute the imbalance to the fact that Brazilian music is distributed by the multinationals both in Brazil and abroad, while films are almost invariably handled by domestic companies. It is the American majors which handily dominate the Brazilian box office.

'The film market in Brazil relies almost exclusively on movie theatres,' according to Embrafilme's former managing director Moacir de Oliveira. 'In the United States theatres account for 40 per cent of gross revenues; the rest comes from home video. In Brazil, however, the situation has been complicated by rampant piracy. We can't even rely on sales to Brazilian television to finance our pictures. During the days of the military government, the government invested heavily in television, while the cinema had to fend for itself. Now television doesn't need us.'

The comparative history of film and television is a textbook example of this curious unequal development, unique in

the world. Brazil's leading network, TV Globo, is the largest broadcaster after ABC, NBC, CBS and Fox Broadcasting. Brazil also boasts three other networks, SBT, Manchete and TV Bandeirantes. Brazilian television has likewise embarked on an internationalisation strategy, but from a more stable financial base and with more success than the film industry. That strategy is based on key financial moves both within and outside Brazil and on the development and export of a most peculiar item—telenovelas, serialised melodramas or soap operas.

TV Globo is owned by the vast Globo organisation. Apart from its five broadcast facilities, 35 affiliates and hun-

The leading network, TV Globo, is the largest broadcaster after ABC, NBC, CBS and Fox Broadcasting

dreds of retransmission centres, Globo's holdings include the newspaper *O Globo* (one of the country's biggest, founded in 1925), Globo radio (inaugurated in 1944), the publishing group Rio Grafica Editora: the audiovisual recording company SIGLA, electronics manufacturer Telcom, show-business promotion firm VASGLO and an art gallery.

With the help of government support, TV Globo rapidly became self-sufficient, soon producing most of its own programmes. As the network developed, so did the country's broadcast advertising market. Today, 70 per cent of all money spent on advertising in Brazil goes to Globo. In 1972, Brazil exported practically nothing in the way of TV programmes. But ten years later Globo was

reporting exports worth \$7 million, mainly to Latin American countries but also to Italy, West Germany, Britain, the United States and Africa. That figure corresponded to what all the French television networks and production companies together were exporting before the deregulation of the French industry. Meanwhile, Globo began distributing its programmes dubbed into Spanish in the United States. And in 1982, the network began its own cable service in the us with programmes dubbed into English. During the same period, the Brazilian network pursued its policy of international expansion by acquiring a controlling interest in Tele Monte Carlo.

Globo's development follows the classic trajectory of a burgeoning multinational. The network mushroomed at the same time that other sectors of Brazilian industry were mastering high technologies such as aeronautics and computers; their concurrent growth has resulted in a gradual redistribution of the country's export markets. As media critic Armand Mattelard has pointed out in his seminal book International Image Markets, Brazil's exports to developing countries represented 9.6 per cent of its total in 1960. By 1973, the figure had jumped to 18.1 per cent, and by 1977 to 24.1 per cent. On the other hand, exports to the 'developed countries' fell from 84.8 per cent in 1960 to 68.1 per cent in 1977.

Trade with Third World countries is likely to increase as Brazil's industrial sophistication develops. As this occurs, competition with these countries diminishes and a complementary relationship replaces it. But while Brazil's television industry anticipated the economic programmes of president-elect Collor, a move towards a 'first world'

model, the cinema remains tied to the apron strings of an outdated system of state support. Current thinking in both government and industry has set back a solution, by casting the alternative to that paternalism in terms of effacement of the cinema's national heritage through deal-driven international coproduction.

Under a Collor presidency, it is likely that this state support for the cinema may dry up and the industry decisionmakers' penchant for central planning dissipate. It may have to; one distinct possibility is that Collor may seek to disband Embrafilme.

'Embrafilme has already radically transformed its outlook,' claims Don Ranvaud, author of Bye Bye Brazil, a survey of the Brazilian film industry. 'The money given to producers now is not like a grant anymore. The financial plan has to be much tighter, and the marketing strategy far more aggressive from the start. They also control cash flow and delay payments to keep the interest for themselves-which at 60 per cent per month means something!'

Ranvaud adds that the industry is developing a more regionally oriented programme. The state cinema authority is now supporting the construction of a film centre and studio in the North Eastern state of Ceara. Meanwhile, the state of Sao Paolo has initiated its own scheme, funding ten new projects in part. All that, of course, is positive. But by most accounts, new institutional support, whether from Brazil's state or federal governments, isn't any more a remedy for the cinema than new loans are for the country's economy.

Film producers around the world are fond of referring to the current 'crisis' facing the cinema in their country. However, in Brazil-with its annual inflation rate of 1,800 per cent and its first democratically elected government in three decades-the crisis facing the cinema is clearly not the highest priority. But if the Collor administration is to deliver the 'new beginning' for the country that it has promised, it must also develop an infrastructure for the development of a national culture in its most complex and costly form—the cinema. The new decision-makers of the Brazilian film industry must break with the tradition of pharonic projects that their countrymen have perceived as solutions to problems from the Amazon to runaway inflation.

It took an international outcry to put a stop to the outgoing government's Xingu Altmira Dam complex, which would have flooded 7,000 square miles of rain forest to produce electricity. However, it is unlikely that the rest of the world would raise the hue and cry if Brazil decided tomorrow, for example, to give its cinema 'market reserve' the force of law. Under the Collor administration, of course, that prospect is unlikely. But then government agencies-especially Brazilian oneshave historically been keen to rush in where wise men fear to tread.

DOUBLE TAKES

J. J. Hunsecker on some movie japes, a Nabokov 'Torn Curtain' and films left out in the Cold War

THE STATE OF THE S

PRANKSTERS

LEGISLE PERMATERANCIONE CONTROL NAMED DE LA CONTROL DE LA In Terry Southern's splendid comic novel The Magic Christian, one of the mischievous practical jokes perpetrated by Guy Grand, the eccentric millionaire hero, is to buy his own cinema. He screens The Best Years of Our Lives in a print to which he has added one short, specially filmed sequence, during the scene in which the war veteran, who has hooks instead of hands (played by the real-life amputee Harold Russell, who, incidentally, won two Oscars for

the role-a unique achievement), sits on

the front porch with his fiancée:

'The hero was courting her, in his quiet way—and this consisted of a brave smile, more or less in apology, it would seem, for having the metal hooks instead of hands-while the young girl's eyes shone with tolerance and understanding . . . a scene which was interrupted by Grand's insert: a cut to below the girl's waist where the hooks were seen to hover for an instant and then disappear, grappling urgently beneath her skirt. The duration of this cut was less than one-half second, but was unmistakably seen by anyone not on the brink of sleep.'

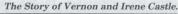
Those in the audience who noticed the incongruous addition couldn't believe their eyes. Not only was the rest of the film entirely ruined for them, but they stayed on and sat through the next screening to make certain that the scene was really there. But Grand never ran the doctored print twice in succession, so spectators left the cinema doubting their own sanity.

Viewers of films on TV are usually more worried by omissions than insertions. However, some may have felt like Guy Grand's victims when watching the television broadcast of The Story of Vernon and Irene Castle during the Astaire/Rogers season earlier this year. This is far from being one of the duo's great films and attention may have been flagging slightly during the scene when the dancing couple find themselves out of work in Paris. As they stroll down the pavement, the following exchange occurs:

ASTAIRE: 'Well, we've got our health, we're young, we're in Paris, we're on our honeymoon. What more do we want?

ROGERS: 'Nothing. Oh, look! Isn't that a darling Dutch Cap?'

It's a deeply unsettling moment, partly, at least, because it's hard to gauge whether the joke is intentional or not. Is there a hint of a wicked smile around Astaire's eyes? Certainly the Supplement of the Oxford English Dictionary cites examples of its use to describe a form of contraception as early as 1922. And there is also some reason to believe that the film was made in a disenchanted frame of mind. Vernon Castle had died in the Great War, but Irene was still very much alive and it was she who insisted that the film was stuck with a cumbersome title of her choosing. Made in 1939, it was also the last film that Astaire and Rogers did together for RKO and there is a detectable sense of sourness about it. It contains relatively few dance sequences





DOUBLE TAKES

and most are either deliberately inept or a constricted pastiche of the Castles' prewar style.

At times the film seems like an act of self-sabotage by the pair and it is not difficult to imagine the Dutch Cap reference being slipped in as a way of thumbing their noses at the intrusive Mrs Castle, or perhaps just as a cynical joke. On the other hand, they may simply have been referring to what the OED terms 'a woman's cap of lace or muslin with a triangular piece rolled back at each side'—but that would be far too boring.

There are other more straightforward examples of film-makers taking surreptitious revenge. In Simon Gray's BBC TV film *Old Flames*, screened in January, a list of men who had apparently ruined the life of Simon Callow, having insulted him as a schoolboy, and whom he had first blackmailed for past crimes and then murdered, were named Billington, Coveney, Shulman and Wardle after theatre critics with whom Gray was displeased.

Attentive viewers may recall the episode of Fawlty Towers concerning the death of a guest in the hotel. In one scene, while trying to dispose of the body, Basil Fawlty and Manuel stumble in on one of the guests who is inflating a rubber woman. Few noticed that the man had earlier been identified as Mr Ingrams, but the reference was not lost on its intended target, Richard Ingrams, who as television critic of the Spectator had been the only person to give the series an unfavourable review.

A much odder and more mysterious example occurs in Peter Weir's *Dead Poets Society*. The wicked headmaster is played by Norman Lloyd, whose most famous screen role is as the traitor Fry in *Saboteur*. At the grim climax of *Dead Poets Society*, as the rebels are hauled before the headmaster, one boy shouts that they are going 'to fry'. Is this the most obscure of film-buff references or just a coincidence?

HITCH TO NABOKOV

Donald Spoto's biography of Alfred

Hitchcock portrayed a man so malevolent and crazed that it seemed surprising the director was permitted to remain at liberty. There is clearly a balance that needs to be redressed, and one surprising contribution to the cause has come with the edition of Vladimir Nabokov's selected letters (published by Weidenfeld & Nicolson).

One of the most fascinating is a long, eloquent letter written to Nabokov by Hitchcock (in November 1964) suggesting two possible projects. The first idea is an earlier version of Torn Curtain, which, roughly sketched and tentative, seems of considerably more interest than the finished film. Hitchcock speculates that the wife of the apparently defecting scientist could be converted to

his cause before discovering that he is actually a double agent. It is precisely this ambiguity that is missing from the inert final film. In the second story suggestion, a girl leaves a convent in Switzerland and returns to her family, who use the running of their hotel as a cover for criminal activities.

What impresses is the appropriateness of the ideas not just to themes that interested Hitchcock himself but to central themes in Nabokov's own work. The *Torn Curtain* scenario involves notions of emigration that were at the heart of Nabokov's own life. The second scenario could easily have been invented by Nabokov himself, concerning as it did a young girl, the corruption of innocence and life in a hotel, the environment in which Nabokov lived and was to remain for the rest of his life.

Nabokov rejected the first idea, claiming ignorance of the workings of the secret service, but he was enthusiastic about the second. He was so busy on his own work, however, that he was unable even to begin thinking about the story until the following summer, and since Hitchcock wanted immediate action the project fell through.

Nabokov also appended to his reply two ideas of his own. One was a romance, which Hitchcock rejected as not in his genre; the second an intriguing reversal of *Torn Curtain*, concerning a Russian defector to the United States who faces threats from Russian spies. Unfortunately, Hitchcock thought this unacceptable because it had already been used in William Wellman's *The Iron Curtain* in 1948.

Hitchcock was, it seems, temporarily disenchanted with screenwriters who, he told Nabokov, 'are not the type of people to take such ideas as these and develop them into responsible story material. They are usually people who

adapt other people's work. That is why I am by-passing them and coming direct to you—a story-teller.'

Of course Nabokov was not new to screenwriting. He had devoted immense time and energy to adapting Lolita for Stanley Kubrick and it is regrettable that these two great émigrés never worked together. The failure damaged Hitchcock more than Nabokov. He later turned to Brian Moore, to whom he may have been drawn as a novelist on Catholic themes. Moore is an outstanding novelist but had never showed much interest in the cinema and had no particular affinity with the film's subject matter. Hitchcock was not satisfied with the resulting script and had it rewritten by the equally odd choice of Keith Waterhouse and Willis Hall. Fine writers once again, but their screenwriting experience was in a style of films that could not have been further from Hitchcock's own.

THE RUSSIANS ARE COMING

The last Hunsecker column discussed the problems caused for purveyors of pseudo-Russian film locations by glasnost. Film-makers will now no longer need to use Dundee or Helsinki to stand in for Moscow when the Russians are desperate for any sort of foreign currency.

Since these observations were made, the pace of developments in Eastern Europe has been such as to leave some completed films already looking dangerously out of date. Gene Hackman's new film, The Package, is a cross between The Manchurian Candidate and The Day of the Jackal about an attempt to assassinate Gorbachev to prevent him signing a disarmament treaty. All very timely, but before the film opened Gorbachev had already signed agreements

Paul Newman and Dwight Schultz in Shadow Makers.



DOUBLE TAKES

that left the radical developments in the film looking tame. Worse—or, for the rest of us, better—still, the early scenes take place in a Cold War version of divided Berlin that no longer exists.

For the first time in history, the pace of political change has become faster than the gestation period of films. As a result, *The Package* was set in a nearfuture that never came about. Another film that at the time of writing has not yet opened but seems also to have missed its moment is *The Hunt for Red October*, starring Sean Connery, which is based on the most successful Cold War novel of the Reagan years, the story of a Russian submarine which defects to the side of the Americans and freedom.

A more subtle and contentious casualty of the zeitgeist may be Roland Joffé's Fat Man and Little Boy, which took gross receipts of under \$4 million on its American release (and has been retitled Shadow Makers for its British release). Though Bruce Robinson's script is about the men who built the atom bomb during the Second World War, its real subject is that the American government, personified by Paul Newman, realised that the war was over and the atom bomb unnecessary but then manipulated the project for their own ends. The bomb was, the film argues, the first weapon of the Cold War, dropped to prevent the Russians gaining a foothold in the East.

This is all plausible enough, and has been argued before, but this film too has been betrayed by its gestation period. When it was conceived, during the military escalation of the Reagan years, its message was starkly relevant. But now with the end of the Cold War and the negotiated arms reductions on both sides, the Cold War is looking less frightening than it once did, and the construction of the bomb itself less of an apocalyptic betrayal.

Hollywood is currently facing an apocalyptic question that is closer to home. Now that we like the Russians, which race can take their place as the allpurpose villains? We're going to get awfully tired of Iranians.

CHRESTANDAY PROPERTY OF THE PARTY OF THE PAR

BODY LANGUAGE

In a recent *Vanity Fair* interview with Daryl Hannah, the journalist Jesse Kornbluth mentioned that Hannah now refuses to appear nude in her films. Playing the mermaid in *Splash*, where nudity really was unavoidable, 'she wore a flesh-coloured body-stocking.' It surely must have been the first to be worn since the 60s and it now sounds as evocative and old-fashioned as Smellorama or those trip-wires that used to kill horses in old Westerns.

Body-stockings belong to that strange period of transition where nudity was somehow both compulsory and impossible—in particular, in Brigitte Bardot films that were aiming for a wide distribution in the English-speaking cinema. There are some wonderfully funny portraits of Bardot thus attired looking rather like a hairless teddy bear. Hunsecker's favourite example, in a book about sex in the cinema (written in the early 60s), that he was inspecting strictly in the line of duty, is accompanied by a caption ex-

plaining that the body-stocking is visible because of the folds at the wrists and ankles. It omits to mention the more obvious giveaways, which include the fact that Ms Bardot's breasts lack nipples, like the female centaurs in *Fantasia*, and her abdomen lacks a belly button, like Eve.

Another famous wearer of a bodystocking was Jayne Mansfield during the Broadway run of George Axelrod's Will Success Spoil Rock Hunter? in the mid-50s. Though, characteristically, Mansfield created immensely useful publicity by flamboyantly refusing to wear it, claiming it was too hot and uncomfortable. But by the late 60s, the body-stocking was replaced by that fascinating concept, the body double. This can be achieved in various ways. Most people who have seen Otto Preminger's Such Good Friends believe they have seen a photograph of a naked Dyan Cannon. In fact, Cannon's head was superimposed on the body of a naked model.

More widely publicised was the model who stood in for Angie Dickinson during the shower scene in Brian De Palma's *Dressed to Kill*, and it is typical of De Palma's playful obsession with the mechanics of cinema that he then went on to make two movies, *Blow Out* and *Body Double*, that explore the implications of doubling on screen.

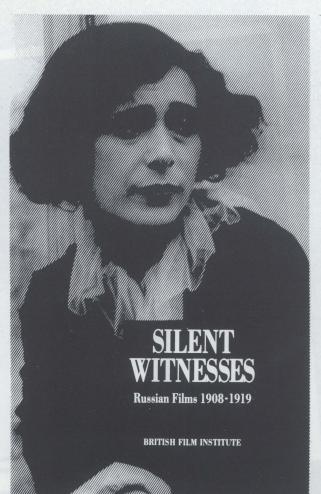
There are other less well-known examples, including Nanette Newman in Man at the Top, Britt Ekland in The Wicker Man and Joanne Whalley-Kilmer who, contrary to appearances, did not scamper naked round the Cliveden swimming pool into the arms of Ian McKellen in Scandal (though suspicions were roused by the clumsy editing forced on the director, Michael Caton-Jones, in order to avoid showing Christine Keeler's face). It was cruelly rumoured that a body double was used for Angie Dickinson because a 50-yearold nude body was not glamorous enough for a Hollywood film. But the technique is generally used because the actress in question, reasonably enough, doesn't want to take off her clothes. This reluctance, however, raises an almost philosophical problem. Is there any point in not appearing nude, when, due to the use of a double, 99 per cent of the audience will believe that you have, while only you, God and the camera crew know for sure that you didn't? This was where the body-stocking came into its own, an instant alienation effect that fooled no one.

The contrast with male actors is instructive. Even in films where fifty stuntmen are credited and the heroes change shape and hair colour every time they swap a punch, leading actors still feel the need to maintain the fiction that they perform their own stunts. Truly, all is vanity. But it comes in different kinds.

A Woman Like Satan: a stockingless Bardot?



J. J. HUNSECKER



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SHOT IN BERLIN ON THE

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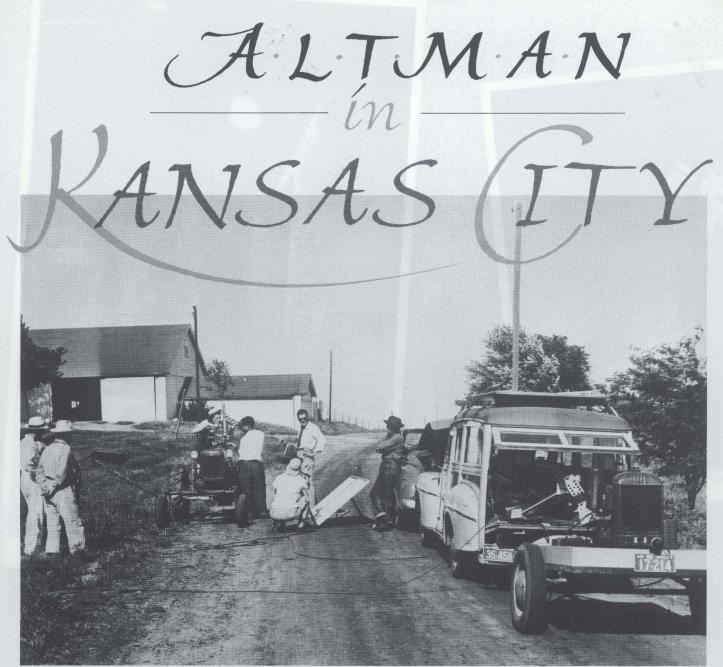






Daniela Poggi, Alan Bates.





Robert Altman (in sunglasses) and Calvin crew filming a road safety short.

Robert Altman does not own up to much of his career before he directed M*A*S*H in 1969, and he is very unspecific about most of his life before he went to Hollywood in 1956. He has said that everything he did before he began to direct theatrical motion pictures in

earnest is 'garbage'.

But Altman, who was born and raised in Kansas City, Missouri-parochial school, military academy, a solid middle-class routine—spent formative years in the Midwest as a film-maker. After service as a bomber pilot during World War Two, and a series of disillusionments on the fringe of the motion picture industry, he returned to live in Kansas City between 1949 and 1956. Here, in his early 20s, he was as busy as he ever was to be in Hollywood, full of crackpot schemes and whirling energy, churning out an amazing amount of film independent of his principal job as a director of industrials for the nationally known Calvin Company.

A full accounting of what he did would no doubt astonish even Altman. There was at least one independent feature before his low-budget teenage film The Delinquents, several TV series and pilots, local commercials and a

formative crack at directing small theatre. As striking as the volume of work is the nature of those projects that occupied Robert Altman long ago-the themes which then recur in a cycle throughout his career, not to mention the relationships forged then which were to span the years ahead.

It was the greatest training ground in the world for a director,' says Frank

Barhydt. 'After this Calvin course of training, there's not much you don't know about making motion pictures. Bob [Altman] has said everything he ever learned he learned at Calvin-or I taught him. He was undoubtedly drunk at the time, but there's a lot of truth in that. I've never seen anything he has done-anything-that you can't find the seeds of at Calvin.'

In 1986, Frank Barhydt was 70 years old and still living in Kansas City proper. Unlike Robert Altman, he had never left. Barhydt had worked at the Calvin Company for nearly thirty years, had been head of production for twentyfive of those years, before retiring in 1972. The Calvin organisation had come under new management in the mid-1950s, and business had begun to decline thereafter.

By the late 1960s, the production staff had been cut drastically. Studios in Louisville, Pittsburgh and Detroit were sold. Longtime accounts drifted away. Finally, there was only the Calvin

Adapted from two chapters of Robert Altman: Jumping Off the Cliff, copyright © 1989 by Patrick McGilligan and reprinted through special arrangement with St Martin's Press Inc, New York.

operation in Kansas City, where it had all began, and by the mid-1980s the company had formally dissolved. The seven-storey building constructed by Robert Altman's grandfather at the corner of Truman and Troost stood empty and shimmering. There were newspapers and empty paper cups next to the editing machines, as if people had just left for a cigarette break.

But it was in the heyday of Calvin, in the late 1940s and early 50s, that Robert Altman met Frank Barhydt and learned from him and others the language, the fundamentals, the psychology of making movies. 'Those were good days,' says Barhydt. The Calvin film-makers were young, enthusiastic. There was esprit de corps. They were all violent liberals. 'Bob hasn't changed that much. He's still a violent liberal. I've changed though. I've gone completely in the opposite direction. Do you know my son? He wrote a couple of films with Bob. Quintet was one. Did you see it? One of the damnedest things I ever saw-didn't make any sense

Barhydt's son Frank was a coscreenwriter of *Health* as well as *Quintet*, and an actor in the cable series *Tanner '88*. More than once young Barhydt quoted to his father Altman's maxim that a film-maker should be making films for himself first, and audiences second. 'Stupidest thing I ever heard of,' says Barhydt, this man who spent his life in service to movies with corporate sponsors and utterly functional messages.

For nearly half a century, Calvin, the creation of advertising man F. O. Calvin and his wife Betty, was one of the major industrial film companies in the United States. It handled the accounts of such companies as Du Pont, Goodyear, Caterpillar and General Mills. It pioneered the use of 16mm sound technology, of new Kodak processing methods and of

Somm film. It won more than its share of accolades at trade festivals. It held nationwide sales and training seminars that attracted a who's who of business. Whatever paid, it made—government films, commercials, educationals, industrials, documentaries. 'Calvin turns out 18 million feet of film a year, or enough to make one 16-millimeter strip stretching from Key West to Seattle and part way back,' reported one local newspaper.

The Calvin building was impressive. The old New Center Building at 11th and Troost, just east of downtown, had been erected by Altman's grandfather, Frank G. Altman Sr, back in 1907. Frank Sr had made the mistake of presuming the downtown would spread eastward, which it never did. Consequently, it was one of the few high-rises in the area, with plenty of space for a regular staff of two hundred and a magnificent soundstage, 80 by 120 feet with a 30-foot ceiling, converted

from the former New Center theatre.

Robert Woodburn was already working on the premises. A grade-school acquaintance of Altman's, Woodburn was back in Kansas City, visiting, when someone told him about the Calvin Company. Woodburn had been thinking about concentrating on movies, instead of Broadway, where he was knocking around, so the timing was right. He faked a résumé, so the people at Calvin would think he was almost 30 (he was only 22) and that he had experience writing advertising scripts for the J. Walter Thompson agency. When he was hired, he immediately went to the how-to books. The next thing Woodburn knew, the phone rang and it was Altman, who was also back in town.

Altman was 'nothing if not a con man' back then, as ever, says Woodburn. Altman called Woodburn over to an office where he was fronting a dog tattooing business. He had heard about the Calvin set-up. Would Woodburn help him get a foot in the door? Sometimes, whatever fate deals you makes all the



The Calvin Company building in downtown Kansas City.

sense in the world. That is the moral of many an Altman film. Here fate was dealing him Calvin—the perfect outfit for someone hungering to make movies but locked out of Hollywood. It offered training, obscurity, freedom, a paycheck and the sort of bargain-basement alternative to established ways and means that Altman, in his career, has wisely adopted as an ethic.

On Woodburn's recommendation, Altman was brought in for an interview, and he pestered Barhydt enough to be hired. 'He knew nothing,' said Barhydt. 'He said so. You could tell.' He started out on the service end, driving the generator truck and handling new accounts. But like his father, B. C., a fabled Kansas City insurance salesman, Altman was full of energy and wisecracks. Within six months he was elevated to a director's slot.

At any given time, there were four or five directors at Calvin, usually operating with the same number of rotating camera crews. Several titles would be in the process of being filmed simultaneously—on the studio sound-stage or outdoors. And sometimes, even while a director was working on his own project, he would be doing inserts or narration for someone else's film. Whenever a director was working on a film to be developed entirely by Calvin, he was usually writing the script, too. That way, figured Barhydt, who organised the system, a director would not write something he could not film, and in the long run there would have to be adherence to the dollars and cents.

Budget was always a primary concern. In those days, it cost Calvin about \$1,200 to produce each finished minute of film. The films were usually twenty to twenty-five minutes in length, and production could take anywhere from six weeks to six months. A large firm might order as many as three or four hundred prints for distribution. According to Barhydt, a director could be involved in ten or twelve films in a year—adding up to perhaps sixty pro-

ductions Altman worked on during the five to six years he was associated with Calvin, or roughly the equivalent of ten feature films. There is no precise accounting. The records are in dusty vaults and because the clients did not always want to pay for them, credits were not necessarily formalised on the screen.

It was quite a place, Calvin. The longtime Calvin hands remember it as a happy outfit. Hours, especially for the creative people, were flexible, as long as deadlines were met. There were company picnics and annual Christmas parties at the Calvins' house. There was camaraderie, profit-sharing, access to top management, promotion from within, encouragement of initiative. Unlike other companies that made industrial films, at Calvin a union was voted out several times because people were

fundamentally satisfied.

A few directors, like Altman, worked with one eye cocked on Hollywood. But even those who never escaped Kansas City watched Hollywood movies and in their own way tried to ape the newest tricks and techniques. They regarded themselves as professional film-makers and thought of themselves as being involved in a minor-league Golden Age. 'I went to the movies and would see what had been done,' says Charley Paddock, one of Altman's regular Kansas City cameramen. 'Then I would go and recreate the lighting and techniques and camera movement and front projection and rear projection and all that. I can't imagine any other industry would be more interesting than what we were doing.'

Richard Peabody, in those days a Calvin assistant director, says that Altman was always holding it up to people that he had been to Los Angeles and was going back. Peabody recalls the leather jacket Altman wore and used to be so proud of—Altman had bought it in Los Angeles, and he would not trust anyone locally to clean it. He sent it to Hollywood for cleaning.

Peabody recalls Altman's office at Calvin, lined with the collected bound volumes of two improbable literary gods. One was Norman Corwin, the broadcaster and social commentator noted for his radio adaptations of literature and verse. The other was Tennessee Williams, the flowery and eloquent dramatist of the South.

All the local theatre people performed in the Calvin films again and again, the same faces in thousands of reels shipped to corporate offices all over the world. These same people also dominated the Kansas City radio-waves, the television

channels and the civic theatre presentations; in a sense, they were Altman's first stock company, and many of them were to follow or precede the director to Hollywood, cropping up repeatedly in bit parts in Altman's television episodes and films. They are not particularly well known to the public, but they were part of Altman's extended 'family' in Kansas City almost forty years ago: radio broadcaster turned actor Richard Peabody (Littlejohn on Tv's Combat, produced and directed, in its first season, by Altman), ingenue Diane Brewster, 'cousin-in-law' Susan (Kiger) Davis, who has made a speciality of playing suburban Moms, Owen Bush, the laconic character actor.

The Calvin company could also call on public figures with Missouri ties. Harry Truman is glimpsed in more than

one Calvin production, and since he was accessible in nearby Independence, most of the crews filmed him at least once. He was spoken of as if he were a friendly neighbour. Truman made the idea of the Presidency human, and spurred Altman's fascination with the top job in films as disparate as Nashville, Health, Secret Honor and Tanner'88.

Barhydt's contacts included former Kansas City radio and newspaper colleagues Walter Cronkite, Howard K. Smith and Chet Huntley—all these big network news names did occasional Calvin moonlighting. Bob Considine, the World War Two broadcaster who was an uncle of actor John Considine (and co-writer of Altman's A Wedding), was another journalist who appeared as on-camera narrator in more than one Calvin production directed by Altman.

ALTMAN AT CALVIN

Most of the films Altman made at Calvin are lost and forgotten. But some won awards, some are warmly recollected by the people who toiled on them, and some have an affinity with his later Hollywood features:

• THE MAGIC BOND This had a fairly steep budget for a production of interviews, staged scenes and newsreel explicating the history and credo of the Veterans of Foreign Wars. Location footage includes scenes of the National Home of the VFW in Jackson, Michigan, of a national vFw convention and a veterans' parade in Boston. Cameraman Arthur Goodell remembers Altman setting up for elaborate parade coverage around Boston Common and then instructing him to 'dry-run' the cameras all day, just to make the parade officials feel good. Then Altman did his 'usual disappearing act' into the bars of Boston's infamous 'Combat Zone' while the Calvin crew pointed the camera at marching bands and memorial units.

Much of the film is jingoistic, as journalist Bob Considine narrates a script extolling 'the magic of comradeship'. What startles is the five-minute opening segment, tagged-on by Altman to the sanctioned vrw script. It is like a scene from another movie: a hellish window on a situation of war. A squadron is trapped; drink and cigarettes circulate among the doomed soldiers; crumbling plaster and exploding bombs punctuate a monologue about circumstance and death. It is a *Combat* segment in embryo.

• THE PERFECT CRIME Sponsored by Caterpillar and the National Safety Council. Here, Altman created another nightmarish prelude before settling down to the agreed spiel.

The short opens brutally with the staged murder of a mother and child during a night-time robbery of a neighbourhood grocery store. The killer is apprehended after appropriate public outcry. What does all this have to do with safe-driving precepts? Virtually

nothing—except that a more truly 'perfect crime' occurs, in the next sequence of harrowing subjective photography, when a reckless driver causes a crash that kills his own wife and child. The narrator admonishes: 'Yet there is no public indignation, so the killer gets away scot-free . . . '

The message, of all things, is that if taxpayers invested in better roads built by sturdy Caterpillar heavy equipment, then this roadway misfortune might be avoided. This short won one of the eighteen 'little Oscars' awarded by the association of industrial film-makers in 1955.

• THE LAST MILE A twenty-minute roadsafety film that begins with an atmospheric take-off of the final scene in Angels with Dirty Faces. Down 'the last mile' to the electric chair walks a condemned killer. Altman's effective camerawork cuts between close-ups of the final footsteps of the convict and the spectacular car smashes that were the meat and potatoes of these safety films. The message: Every day, more people travel 'the last mile' on the highway than are executed for capital crimes in the nation's prisons. With good roads built by safety-conscious Cat crews, fewer victims will meet their fate. This film, too, won safety awards in 1953.

• THE SOUND OF BELLS This sales film is cited by both cameraman Charley Paddock and producer Frank Barhydt as exemplary of Altman and one of the finest of the Calvin films.

It is a lonely Christmas Eve at a gas station. Santa Claus drives in for a fillup in a car stuffed with packages and toys. The jolly one is low on cash, so in

The improvised opening sequence of The Magic Bond.



The Hollywood actors and actresses brought to Kansas City for a week of character chores were not the stars of the profession, but they were well-paid and appreciated. William Frawley was one, used more than once, and he became Altman's contact, later on, with Desilu television (and Altman's prolific work with the syndicated series The Whirlybirds). John Carradine, lanternjawed patriarch of the Carradine clan and father of actor Keith Carradine, who starred for Altman in Thieves Like Us and Nashville, was another. Altman's link with the Considines and the Carradines originated like this, miles and years away from Hollywood.

Two or three times Altman was fired by Barhydt and/or quit. He would curse the dullness of industrial films, stalk out, then slink back sheepishly the next day to reclaim his job. 'Bob was a character unto-himself, and I've never known anybody quite like him,' says Barhydt. 'But at the same time he wasn't a madman. He was an ordinary young Air Force guy out of the service trying to make a living and screw all the girls he could find—and he was fairly successful at it. But his love was pictures and trying to succeed. If you were his boss, you put up with an awful lot, because, well, you liked the guy and he did have enormous talent.'

Twice Altman left to knock on doors in Hollywood. He would vanish overnight from Calvin, then return months later, broke and deflated, resuming his former responsibilities with barely a whimper. Once he went with the idea of selling his treatment for a prescient comedy about UFOS that he had conceived with James Stewart in mind. Nothing came of it. When Altman came back to Calvin, Barhydt stole the title of his James Stewart script and stuck it on one of the more innocuous industrials in production. Then Barhydt let the title drop in a staff meeting. 'Bob was amazed, just furious,' recalls Woodburn. 'Then he started to laugh.'

The second time Altman went out to Hollywood, Louis Lombardo and his family went along with Altman and his second wife Lotus. Lombardo was a young Calvin gaffer and gofer from the Italian neighbourhood who was several years Altman's junior, and who was to become, in time, his editor on such films as Brewster McCloud, McCabe and Mrs Miller, The Long Goodbye, California Split and Thieves Like Us.

return for a tank of gas he promises the incredulous station-owner a flood of new customers over the coming year. Each of these Santa-sent customers will be made known to the attendant by 'the sound of bells'.

The new customers start arriving in droves and buying tires. Sandwiched in with the poker-faced humour is a lot of practical information, tips about politeness to customers, cross-switching tires and other dealer concerns. A year later, it is Christmas Eve again, and the station-owner is waiting with a certain gift of his own, to see if Santa Claus will return . . . The only soundtrack here is the mysterious and recurring jingle of bells.

Altman (halfway up crane) shooting a sports training film.



• SPORTS FILMS Every year there was at least one high-school rules-of-sports film—alternating football, basketball and baseball. Partly because Altman was a sports buff, and partly because he liked to make off to far locations, he usually directed it. Critics who believe Altman is incapable of telling a straightforward tale should be condemned to see these 26-minute bon-bons of information-packed set-ups and drive-ahead exposition. They are all rules and tips, blackboard diagrams, slow-motion live-action, interspersed with advertising plugs for Wheaties and Wilson Sporting Goods.

Altman spiced up these films with 'moments' that probably looked exceedingly resourceful at the time: a dream sequence in *Modern Football* (1951); a story-within-the-story 'frame' in *King Basketball* (1952), in which Altman, impersonating a nattily-dressed Hollywood director, comments satirically on cinema sports clichés; cameo appearances, as in *Modern Baseball* (1953), from baseball greats.

The sports rules films were often shot in the Southwest, in conjunction with one of the participating high schools. There would be unusual (for Calvin) crane and dolly expenses. In the middle of a silly expository item like *Better Football* (1954), one is open-mouthed when suddenly the camera swoops down on the field into the middle of a huddle, a dramatic and expensive visual excla-

mation mark.

Other less orthodox expenses could also be rationalised. On one occasion, Richard Peabody accompanied Altman to Mesa, Arizona. They arrived in the dead of winter to discover that frost had turned the grass on the football field an ugly shade of brown. Altman called one local painter after another, until he found one willing to daub the football field a shamrock green. It cost several hundred dollars, recalls Peabody. And it may not have been a strictly artistic decision. After all, it would take at least three days to dry, and in the meantime the two Calvin employees could run up their per diems and have quite a swinging time.



Jerry Wallace in Corn's-A-Poppin'.

Altman told Lombardo he had some big television deal worked out. Instead, he ended up doing some spots for the National Catholic Bishops' Fund. But there was some problem getting paid, and Altman's money ran out. When Altman left, Lombardo stayed ongoing to work at a Los Angeles blueprint shop as a photostat operator. This time, when Altman came back, he made the vow to a Calvin staff meeting they all remember: 'If I come back one more time, you get to keep me.'

The habit of experiment for its own sake, always within the confines of the budget, began at Calvin. 'He was always trying something different,' says Barhydt. 'In fact, he'd choose difference over quality or meaning. He can't stand to be derivative, or to be thought of as copying something that has already been done.

His most creative efforts did not always pay off in terms of the sponsor's appreciation, because the sponsors were primarily interested in the pitch. The Calvin crew might have found a way to simulate back projection or some other complicated process shot, easily accomplished in Hollywood but a matter of some ingenuity on a low budget in Kansas City. The script might be flavoured with clever puns or one-liners. So what?

Once, Barhydt remembers, Altman executed a perfect 360-degree turn with the camera. It was not easily done. Altman combined six or seven scenes, cut-ins and close-ups, and worked until three a. m. when the camera moved around in a circle smoothly and perfectly. It was beautiful. Everybody was proud of the scene. Right in the middle of a sales film. 'Absolutely a waste of time for the picture,' says Barhydt. 'But at least Altman got a chance to try it and he got all the crew excited, and put

it in the picture. Great scene. The client never noticed it. Altman was just trying to see if he could do it.' The young director was overlapping sound back then-which used to drive Barhydt crazy. 'He tried that several times and several times we had to re-record because you're not getting the essential words the client wants you to get.'

They used multiple cameras for the first time with The Dirty Look, one of everyone's favourites, a gas station comedy short featuring William Frawley. The use of simultaneous cameras was Charley Paddock's idea and Altman went for it whole-hog. It may have come up in conversation with Frawley, who had just hit the heights, after a lifetime of character vignettes, as the upstairs neighbour Fred Mertz in I Love Lucy, a programme which was pioneering the use of three simultaneous 'live' cameras in primetime television.

Altman was known at Calvin for his angles, the overheads, the intense closeups. His camerawork (and editing) was definitely agitated. It was not quite a style. It was more a reaction against the subject matter. Says Paddock: 'That's the reason we got along together. I had the knack of using a lot of camera movement and he encouraged me. To my way of thinking, it made the movie more interesting than just static shots. It gives a third dimension.' 'Altman is crazy about camera movement,' says Barhydt. 'Always has been. He can't stand to have the camera standing still. That's probably a reflection of his own nervous personality. [If he was a camera] . . . he wouldn't want to be standing around looking at you, he'd want to be rambling.'

The Calvin actors and and actresses (which is stretching the point, as most of them were other things in private life, from disc jockeys to socialites) remember Altman fondly as someone who always gave them positive feedback and urged them on to a higher level. On the set there was unflagging good humour. 'He had the knack of getting people to do what they do best-naturally,' Paddock says. 'He'd sit back and watch and see what he liked about what they did. That was his long suit, and as you know that has been his trademark in his movies, to get people to do their own thing."

'This guy's great talent is his enthusiasm for a project,' says Barhydt. 'Doesn't last-but when he goes into it, this is the biggest thing he has ever done. He would transmit this to actors and get them so fired up about a job, a part, that they'd kill themselves for him. He'd keep them on a set until three o'clock in the morning, until they were dropping-but they loved him.'

Apart from people who resent never having been invited along to Hollywood, you discover little in the collective memory of Altman, from those Kansas City days, other than affection and gratitude for the pleasure of his company. At this stage of his career, before his perceived rejection, betrayal and disillusionment in Hollywood, with youth as his armour, Altman was at the centre of an admiring extended family.

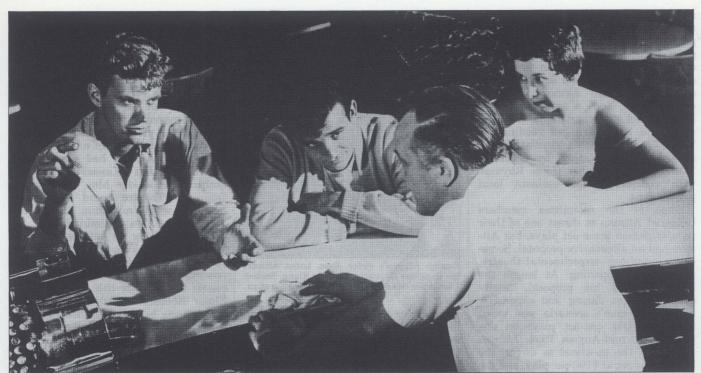
In interviews, Altman does not own up to the one theatrical feature he was associated with during this period, perhaps with good reason. A quarter of a century before Nashville, there was Corn's-A-Poppin', his first film with a country-and-western score and a showbusiness milieu. Few cineastes will ever have heard of it. It was produced in Kansas City, distributed spottily in the Midwest and then withdrawn from circulation; it has not been seen publicly since 1950 (the ownership rights are in dispute); and it is (Altman would agree) one of the worst movies ever made.

Although Altman did not belong to the old boy network in Hollywood, he could at least claim membership in the Kansas City one. At Southwest, briefly, he went to school with Elmer Rhoden Jr, whose father Elmer Rhoden Sr was one of the owners of Commonwealth Theatres, a chain of some 102 regional theatres. Elmer Jr wanted to get into producing movies; he had the distributing apparatus at hand, and he had the necessary capital to invest.

Robert Woodburn, with whom he had once collaborated on a Christmas card venture (Altman drew the little cartoons), had been tapped as director of Corn's-A-Poppin', and Altman was brought in almost as an afterthought to

help on the script.

It may have been Elmer Jr who insisted on the premise-certainly no one else is bragging about having thought of it. The idea and title (a variation on Hellzapoppin') was a facile spoof of backstage musicals and revolves around a double-dealing press agent for the Pinwhistle Popcorn Company who pushes the sponsorship of a corny TV hour to discourage sales and boost competitors. But the scheme backfires with the discovery of a new high-quality



The Delinquents, Altman's first feature and ticket to Hollywood.

popcorn, and the sensational debut of an amateur country-and-western singer.

Woodburn and Altman looked for the lead in Hollywood, a place that both of them believed in for luck and magic. A singer by the name of Jerry Wallace was just starting out in Los Angeles doing club dates with a solo act consisting of impressions of country, pop and blues artists, everyone from Gene Autry and Tex Ritter to Nat King Cole and Billy Eckstine. Wallace had a lively style. When Woodburn and Altman found out that he had been born and raised in Kansas City, they liked that fact about him too.

This is an early instance of Altman developing someone from obscurity or another field and proving years ahead of the public. The young, gawky Jerry Wallace would go on, almost a decade later, to record the Top Ten pop hit 'Primrose Lane' and to have a substantial career as a country-and-western artist, as well as a writer of themes for such television shows as *Flipper*.

Wallace was brought to Kansas City for about a week, where, with breakneck speed, most of the scenes for Corn's-A-Poppin' were filmed on two or three threadbare sets erected on the stage of the old Lyceum Theatre. Two stalwart Calvin regulars, Jim Lantz and Keith Painton, are in the cast along with a legitimate country-and-western unit, Hobie and the Hep Cats. Chet Allen is credited as art director for what appear to be painted flats. Woodburn is culpable for the stodgy camerawork. And Altman was on hand, scribbling lines and walking around nervously with a notepad trying to keep up with the pace of filming. He shares the writing credit with Woodburn.

The musical numbers are the only highlights, for Wallace, youthful with lacquered hair and a laminated grin, had a raw flair. But overall, the movie

is hammy, amateurish and ultra-boring. People who rate *Quintet* the nadir of Altman's career have not seen *Corn's-A-Poppin'*. 'It was all so humdrum and thrown together,' says Wallace. 'That was my first and last movie as an actor.' Woodburn, who never directed another theatrical feature, winces with embarrassment when it is mentioned, and says some of the old guys at Ryder's Dubbing in Hollywood still roar with laughter at the memory of having worked on that ludicrous early 'Altman film'.

Also in Kansas City, Altman directed some television commercials for Nellie Don, one of the most famous medium-priced garment companies in the United States, and made a thirty-minute pilot, The Model's Handbook, featuring glamour tips from the model agency run by Eileen Ford. Television attracted Altman as a new and more wide-open market. There were at least two other efforts, possibly more.

One was a syndicated micro-series called Pulse of the City, a kind of poor man's Dragnet, about ambulancechasing and crime incidents in the big city, filmed in Kansas City. Some episodes were takeoffs, others were sharply dramatic. Episodes were fifteen minutes long (the fifteen-minute programme was not so unusual in those days) and were in 16mm colour. The television reference books (without mentioning Altman's involvement) indicate that it ran from September 1953 to March 1954 on the independent Dumont network. Altman and steadfast ally Woodburn were the co-creators and alternating directors.

Before he went off to live in Detroit and launch a career as an independent producer of commercials, industrials and educationals, Robert Woodburn recalls that he and Altman cranked out another syndicated micro-series called (Woodburn is not quite sure of the title) *The City*. Though they filmed something like thirteen scripts back-to-back in eyeblink time, nobody can remember much about the series—whether it was good, what it was about, or whether, in fact, it truly did exist. It is part of the jumbled activity of a period in which Altman shot more film than can be traced or remembered.

Practically everybody who was anybody in Kansas City checked in at the Resident Theatre of the Jewish Community Center for a spell, and it was only a matter of time before Robert Altman did so. Though there was regular traffic between Calvin films and Resident productions, it was Altman's second wife, Lotus Corelli, whom he married in 1954, who encouraged his participation in the Resident programme.

The people of the Resident Theatre remember Lotus vividly as a leading actress in several of their better productions, including Arthur Miller's *The Crucible* and Garson Kanin's *Born Yesterday*. At the time, comments one member of the Resident Theatre, people who knew Lotus and Altman thought Lotus to be the superior talent. Altman had not found himself yet as a director. He was considered a kind of floundering half-genius.

Altman joined the Resident Theatre towards the tail end of his Calvin tenure, in January 1954, and for a brief time, with his customary fervour, he plunged into volunteer activity. After a full day at Calvin he would go to the Jewish Community Center at night, working on plays and production planning. For learning about acting, it was 'one of the wisest things he had ever done,' he told Richard Peabody.

At his initiative was launched an unusual Sunday entertainment and activity programme. The 'art form' of movies was to be highlighted, an indication of Altman's growing seriousness of purpose. At this 'Sundays at Three' film programme, Altman included a seminar on the effects of sound on films (described in the newsletter as a 'light and space show', with Altman's running commentary) and a programme of Norman McLaren short films. He organised and stage-managed readings of T. S. Eliot and Edna St Vincent Millay, as well as a recitation (by Lotus) of 'More Complex Mother Goose Rhymes' with analysis by an eminent local psychologist.

Some of the committee members badgered Altman to direct one of their regular season three-act plays, but Altman had an alternative proposal. Something grandiose-experimental theatre, an outdoor happening. At length the board debated his proposal, finally deeming it too daring and expensive. Instead, Altman's scenario was toned down to three one-act plays on one weekend in mid-August 1954. Altman was given the go-ahead to direct, the budget was set at \$100 per play, and the programme would take place on the roof of the centre.

Altman's avant-garde play choices were revealing, for two of the one-acters were by Tennessee Williams-Hope Is a Thing with Feathers and Portrait of a Madonna. The third may or may not have been written by Altman. Some people remember him as giving that impression. Portrait of a Madonna, with



Family: Altman's sister Joan, Lotus Altman, her daughter Christine, Patricia Klang. Seated: Chet Allen (scenic designer), Richard Sarafian.

Altman directing Lotus, was a particularly indicative selection, since it presaged all the fractured, glassy-eyed women who proliferate in his dreammovies, That Cold Day in the Park, Images, Three Women and Come Back to the Five and Dime, Jimmy Dean, Jimmy Dean. Madonna is basically a one-character monologue in which a childless woman breaks down emotionally while reflecting on the failures of her love life.

On opening night, there was a terrific windstorm. People held on to their hats, flats fell down, one actor left the stage

never to return and, according to Altman, 'the whole thing disintegrated.' (That actor was Richard Sarafian, Altman's future brother-in-law and fellow director.) All the same, and even though fewer than a hundred people attended, the event was deemed meritorious as an experiment. Yet when Altman moved to incorporate these unconventional programmes into the regular schedule, the motion was denied. By early 1955, Altman had come to the conclusion that Kansas City held nothing further for him. He resigned from the Theatre board and moved on. They would miss him. He and his retinue were always stimulating.

The last thing he did was the first 'film de Robert Altman', as they say in the prestigious French journals that now honour his reputation. The Delinquents was another title thought up by Elmer Rhoden Jr; Altman wrote and directed the brief (75 minutes) teenage genre picture, which was photographed in Kansas City locations. The cast was drawn from family and friends, and Calvin, Resident Theatre and local broadcasting talent, with a few 'imported' names from Hollywood (including Tom Laughlin, filmdom's future 'Billy Jack'). In Altman's contract was inserted a stipulation that The Delinquents had to be edited in California. Altman considered it his Kansas City 'escape clause', and in August 1956, he drove cross-country to Hollywood to begin a new life.



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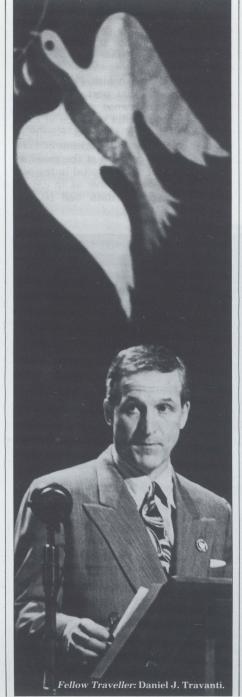
BRIAN NEVE REVIEWS A RECENT ANGLO-AMERICAN FILM ON THE BLACKLIST PERIOD AND CONSIDERS ITS ANTECEDENTS

The film opens with a Hollywood idyll: the central characters frolic on a beach in the bright sunshine and heat of Los Angeles. On the soundtrack the voice of President Roosevelt articulates the dominant liberal creed that, at the time, was the counterpart to that idyll for Hollywood progressives. Yet, following this title sequence, the audience is immediately thrust into the dark days of 1954, in both London and Los Angeles; suddenly 'the heat is on, the snakes are out,' and the idyll is no more. In a few minutes we are introduced to the characters and their societies, and prepared for one of the most ambitious film treatments of the HUAC period and its traumatic impact, in particular, on the Hollywood writer.

By effective use of flashbacks, Fellow Traveller illuminates the period through the experiences, dreams and creative fantasies of writer Asa Kaufman (Ron Silver), a blacklisted American fellow traveller who earns a living in London working on a children's television series. Kaufman refuses to contemplate 'naming names'; and so, fearing the imminent delivery of a subpoena, leaves his wife and children and comes to England. The writer Michael Eaton has skilfully drawn on the experiences of a number of blacklisted writers and directors who either came to London in similar circumstances-Joseph Losey, Cy Enfield and Carl Foreman-or who stayed in America and wrote under assumed names for British television. Ring Lardner Jr, one of the Hollywood Ten, was unable to get a passport to come to Britain until 1958, but he wrote, with Ian McClellan Hunter, more than forty scripts for episodes of The Adventures of Robin Hood, the film series that was independently made and shown on the new commercial network

Fellow Traveller is by no means the first film to take this period as its subject, but most earlier examples have reflected the particular experiences and perspectives of their authors. In contrast, Michael Eaton and director Philip Saville attempt, and achieve, a more

from the mid to late 50s.



distanced appraisal, sympathetic to the leading characters but aware of the moral complexity of the period. While Abraham Polonsky's hopes of writing a script of his novel A Season of Fear seem for the moment to have come to nothing, and Walter Bernstein's script for The House on Carroll Street was atmospheric rather than analytical, the new BBC film, co-produced with the BFI, and with HBO in America, mines the now substantial literature on its subject, including The Inquisition in Hollywood by Larry Ceplair and Steven Englund and Naming Names by Victor S. Navasky.

There are, of course, the well-known examples of films that make metaphoric reference to the period of the Congressional hearings. High Noon (1952), as a parable on the fear and self-protection generated in Hollywood by the attack from outside, in part reflected Carl Foreman's concerns before he left for England. On the Waterfront (1954), by contrast, reflects-along with much else-the perspectives of director and writer as friendly witnesses, justifying co-operative testimony by means of an analogy drawn between the American Communist Party and the waterfront mob, and dramatising the rejection that such testimony entailed.

Earlier films, from the postwar liberal hour in Hollywood, now seem to mirror the tensions of the time. Joseph Losey directed The Boy with Green Hair (belatedly released in 1948) as a parable of a smalltown community's fear of difference and non-conformity. (The writers, Ben Barzman and Al Levitt, were also later blacklisted.) The film recalls Victor Navasky's characterisation of the period as one in which a false equation was made between the radical dissident, the revolutionary and the spy. Here it is the innocent difference of the young boy's miraculous green hair that is taken for something sinister and threatening. Barzman remembers opposition from various quarters, including Lela Rogers, mother of Ginger, but the film survived both this and the hostility of the new RKO boss, Howard Hughes.

Liberals also made oblique comments. John Huston, one of the leaders of the Committee for the First Amendment during its brief life, directed the early scenes of We Were Strangers (1949) as a none-too-veiled attack on the Committee. (Although it was probably too veiled for the HUAC, whose ignorance about film was notorious.) Nicholas Ray also collaborated on work which clearly reflects the fear and conflict of Hollywood at the time of the hearings. In In a Lonely Place (1950), the screenwriter Dix Šteele (Humphrey Bogart) is the vulnerable and violent hero of film noir, but his experiences seem to mirror those of writers driven by official suspicions of their 'loyalty' into paranoia.

Among other 50s films which deal in some way with the period are Joseph Mankiewicz's People Will Talk (1951), Chaplin's A King in New York (1957) and the Siegel/Mainwaring Invasion of the Body Snatchers (1956), which was intended as critical of the effects of McCarthy and his like, although it can also be read as a paranoid fantasy about the internal and external threat of communism.

Later, The Front (1976), writer Walter Bernstein, director Martin Ritt, was an explicit re-creation of the period, focused on an individual who fronts for blacklisted writers in the New York television industry and who finally—and perhaps not particularly convincingly—defies 'the Committee'. Bernstein, like Abraham Polonsky, used such fronts during the 50s in writing the You Are There series for CBS



Lindsay Anderson, director of the 50s Robin Hood story *Anbush*, with Peter Asher.

television. Sidney Lumet, who directed most of those episodes, drew on his experiences of that era for *Daniel* (1983) and—in terms of the issues of loyalty and informing—*Prince of the City* (1981).

Aptly for a British film, Fellow Traveller deals with that part of the story that linked Hollywood with the previously distinct media tradition of British television. We see Asa Kaufman adjusting his eyes to the gloom of London, and the re-creation of the mood as well as the look of the capital in the 50s is certainly as impressive as in Dance with a Stranger. Britain had no Joe

McCarthy, but the oppressiveness of British values based on class and sexual hypocrisy is powerfully depicted.

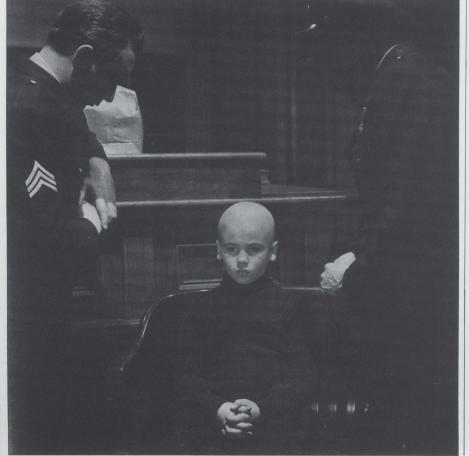
The opening also establishes the effect of the Congressional investigations on Kaufman's best friend, the actor Clifford Byrne (Hart Bochner). We see the actor shoot himself in the mouth while lying in that Hockney-blue symbol of artistic betrayal in Hollywoodthe swimming pool. Only later do we discover that Byrne, a friend of Kaufman since boyhood in New York's Lower East Side, has committed suicide following his private co-operative testimony to the HUAC. Asa and Clifford were, like Arthur Miller's Lou and Mickey in After the Fall, 'young together', and we see the writer's role in supplying his friend with lines for a wartime pro-Soviet benefit and a Warner Bros-type melodrama in which the hero marches defiantly to his death in the electric chair. The emotional closeness of writer and star, part of a smart set within a smart set, is well conveyed. Indeed the 'all for one and one for all' comradeship of the progressive movement in Hollywood, initially strengthened by the first signs of attack from the right, later finds an echo in Kaufman's Robin Hood series.

The shock of the news from America triggers recurring dreams in the writer's mind. Kaufman's relationship with another figure in the Hollywood idyll, Sarah Aitchison (Imogen Stubbs), Byrne's ex-lover who now lives in London, further stimulates Asa's uneasy memories. We see the dreams, or nightmares, that first led Kaufman to consult a (Party-approved) psychotherapist in Hollywood, and later the variations of these dreams which reflect his new anxieties in London. The dream-of an FBI man ('Don't shoot, G-Man') sexually assaulting his mother, while the son, first a boy, later a man, looks on-is part of the complex but precise mosaic of the film. Just as dreams are scrambled messages from waking life-I think the line is Michael Wood's-so Kaufman's creative fantasies are comments on his own life.

Retracing the past, we see the writer's relationship with Jerry Leavy (Daniel J. Travanti), the therapist who ministered to both Kaufman and Byrne. The character of Leavy is based on an actual therapist widely suspected of having passed on information to the FBI and of encouraging a number of clients who were Party members or fellow travellers to 'name names'. One of the mysteries surrounding Kaufman and Byrne-the all-American boys on the beach under the opening titles-relates to the writer's growing anxiety that, by mentioning Byrne at one of Leavy's sessions, he may have prompted his friend's lines in his last, fatal 'appearance' before the Committee. This strand climaxes when the exiled writer confronts the therapist in London, where he is lecturing at a peace rally, and Leavy accuses him of being a 'couch pigeon' rather than a 'stool pigeon'.

The theme of betrayal—of friends and

The Boy with Green Hair (1948), Joseph Losey's parable for the times.





Fellow Traveller: Ron Silver as the writer in exile.

background-is an important one in the actual work of those who suffered the blacklist rather than co-operate with the Committee's investigation. Abraham Polonsky's scripts for Body and Soul (1947) and Force of Evil (1948)both starring the 'golden boy' John Garfield-reflect the Odetsian problems of combining decency and loyalty with success, problems crudely dramatised on the screen in Aldrich's The Big Knife (1955). Whatever the differences in production values between Polonsky's 'fables of the streets' and the low-budget episodes of The Adventures of Robin Hood that Lardner and Hunter worked on from New York, there were opportunities in the television series for discussion of tyranny, privilege and betrayal.

It seems significant that American writers were responsible for launching the series that epitomised the broadening of British popular culture as commercial television challenged a BBC preference for serious and improving live drama. It may have been the first step down the road towards the Broadcasting Bill, but at the time it seemed like a small liberation, for adults as well as children. However studio-bound, the actual Robin Hood series had a slickness and 35mm gloss that contributed to its tremendous success both in Britain and, against the usual resistance to British drama, in America.

Visually, the film plays on the strik-

ing contrast between the sun of Hollywood and the gloom of London; there is also a dash of Hitchcock's eternal London in the policemen who question Kaufman in a café, and in Doreen Mantle's genteelly monstrous landlady. Philip Saville creates a provoking unity from this mix between Los Angeles and London in different time periods, Kaufman's nightmares, the re-creations of the Robin Hood films and archive footage of the reality of war on the Stalingrad front. In addition, the characters watch television: we see the amusement and disbelief with which the House Committee's paranoid vision of 1947 is greeted; while in London Kaufman peers at that less insidious cultural force, the potter's wheel. The 'real' events show up in the fantasies, both in the mind and on the screen, in a way that stresses the complexity rather than the simplicity of making moral judgments about the period.

The five sequences from Kaufman's *Robin Hood* make affectionate reference to the real series, and to memories of it, while also introducing themes from the writer's own drama into the story within a story. The theme of betrayal is introduced in a sequence in which Robin unmasks the treachery of Friar Tuck, who draws a revolver and kills himself as Clifford Byrne had done. Finally, while Kaufman waits for release from a British police cell, follow-

ing his scuffle with Leavy at the disarmament meeting, we see a bloody 'ending' of the Robin Hood strand of narrative, with the writer rejecting the 'showtime' conventions to exact revenge. At the end, however, with Kaufman reunited with his family in London, they are watching the 'They All Laugh' ending of this episode. Sarah, representing the committed side of the radical movement, has walked off to her world of disarmament meetings and political struggle, while Kaufman has adjusted to the 'normalcy' of 50s family life.

The film has a documentary accuracy on the pain of the time, and on the social strains caused by the severing of relationships. Kaufman's wife is like a number of wives of the period who were not part of the 'one of us' cliquishness of the Popular Front; left in Los Angeles, she is openly sympathetic to the route of naming names taken by Sterling Hayden and Odets. The script is also rich with ideas on other issues of the time such as the significance of Jewishness and anti-semitism, and the question of the extent to which the writer could have a creative influence, given the nature of the studio system.

Fellow Traveller, produced by Michael Wearing, expertly combines the sharp and well-informed script with BBC professionalism in direction, casting, music and design. Numerous films are suggested, from Angels with Dirty Faces and Gaslight to Body and Soul and Spellbound. Yet the film successfully matches BBC Drama Department realism with cinematic scale, and with the 'out of the past' theme and splintered form of film noir. It is an actors' film, but distance and perspective are also provided, not least by the playfulness and affection of the Robin Hood scenes.

Thematically, Fellow Traveller seems to underwrite Dalton Trumbo's generous summation of the morality of the blacklist, and to suggest that there were few heroes or villains but many victims, if not all of equal moral standing. Even Jerry Leavy is allowed his ambiguity, and his own attack on the superficiality of the political commitment made by most supporters of the Hollywood Popular Front. While Eaton gains by making Kaufman a fellow traveller who had been in the party at some earlier time, he arguably avoids some of the questions raised by support for Stalin's Soviet Union in the late 40s. But Eaton does seem to suggest, through Leavy in the final shoot-out between him and Kaufman, that the Party may in some way have encouraged the fellow travellers to 'confess' in order to create the witch-hunt that Stalinists-and indeed Stalin-could decry as American democracy. The mystery of Dr Leavy is not entirely resolved. But after we watch Asa Kaufman with his family at the end of the film, purged finally of the trauma of his friend's death by the confrontation with Leavy, we return to the opening scenes on the beach in Los Angeles, to the glad confident morning before the fall.



HOU HSIAN BROOK

Hou Hsiao-hsien, now firmly established as the leading film-maker in Taiwan with nine features and one episode of a portmanteau film to his credit, was born in Meihsien in China's Canton province in 1947 but grew up around Hsinju in Taiwan. He has seen a leaf-shaped island that had spent 51 repressive years under Japanese control transform itself in a generation from a rural society into a dynamic industrial one.

Hou's films are a haunting portrait of the world that was and the edgy, hesitant one that has replaced it, riven with uncertainty about its proper place in the 1990s. Hou has a trick of filming scenes in long shot through an open door, as if we are privileged observers of an older, quieter world. It's a device to



which he constantly returns, never more effectively than in *Daughter of the Nile*, where the last shot—another characteristic open door—can be seen as an emblem of hope even in the Babylon

that is modern Taipei.

Hou is a director with much to say, but he does not make it easy—at least for overseas audiences—to follow him. A City of Sadness, his most ambitious film to date and winner of the top prize at last year's Venice festival, would be hard to fathom without the elaborate rolling titles at the beginning explaining the historical background. And even then it is difficult and demanding because the key incident—the events of 28 February 1947—takes place off-screen and the relationships among a large cast of characters are seldom spelt out

but left for the audience to piece together.

A City of Sadness, the story of an extended family's experiences in the years 1945-49, is not only an oblique history of the island in those troubled years but by implication a quest for roots-a journey in search of what it means to be Taiwanese. Or what it means to be a modern Taiwanese. (Hou does not look back to the seventeenthcentury colonisations of Holland and Spain and their impact on the aboriginal population.) Though nothing in A City of Sadness takes place before 1945 (it begins with the Japanese surrender on 15 August), the effective starting date is 1895, when Taiwan was ceded to Japan in the Treaty of Shimonoseki that ended the first Sino-Japanese

For half a century until 1945 it remained in Japanese hands, reverting to China at the end of the war. But the arrival of mainland troops to take control of the island led to considerable friction that erupted in February 1947 in demonstrations which were savagely suppressed and, until recently, officially denied. A City of Sadness is the first film to acknowledge that these events, in which several thousand were slain, actually occurred. In effect the protests were the expression of a nascent separatist movement intolerable to the nationalists who eventually flooded in with the loss of the mainland to the communists in 1949. To this day, Taiwan, the Republic of China, has resolutely turned its back on independence and sees its long-term goal as the redemption of the mainland from the communist usurpers.

Without this background, which the introductory titles only partly explain, the motivations of the characters and some of the director's stylistic effects might be obscure. The early sequences, depicting the repatriation of the occupying Japanese after 1945, even look Japanese. The beautiful scene in which the departing Japanese girl Shisuko bequeaths a samurai sword to her Taiwanese friend Hinomi might have been shot in the same way by an Ozu or a Mizoguchi in the 1950s. And it's not just a matter of influence. Hou has always maintained that the Ozu flavour many have found in his work is coincidental because at the time it was first remarked upon, he had never seen an Ozu film. Perhaps; but Ozu, after all, was part of the Japanese cultural heritage and for more than fifty years Taiwanese life was imbued with it. Hou may have arrived after the Japanese had left the island, but their legacy lingered on.

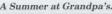
The Lin family, the father and four sons on whom the film focuses, epitomise the reactions of different strata of Taiwanese society to the changing political scene of the immediate postwar years. One son is dead, drafted into the Japanese army in the Philippines and killed in the war. The eldest son is a



The Boys from Fengkuei.

time-server, as ready to run a brothel for the Japanese during the occupation as he is to provide a Shanghainese night club for the new masters from the mainland. Another son is an opportunist, who takes to smuggling and throws in his hand with gangsters, and the youngest son, a deaf-mute unable to express his thoughts except on paper, joins the independence movement. His disappearance, summarily arrested by the police, marks the final chapter in the disintegration of the family. Only the third son, now tortured, traumatised and bereft of reason, survives. And the last shot—the empty reception room of a house that has so often been bustling with activity-is as if a whole way of life had been rubbed out. Among other things, A City of Sadness is an elegy for a vanished world.

A feature of many Hou Hsiao-hsien films, but never so dynamically expressed, is the sudden explosion of violence. Three times in the film quarrels, differences of opinion and needling insults turn ugly in the twinkling of an eye. Knives flash, clubs are brandished, pistols fired-all within seconds. The effect is alarmingly realistic. For once fist fights do not seem an easy recourse to a melodramatic solution but a true reflection of the way violence among highly-strung people can suddenly spiral out of control. It is electrifying because Hou abolishes the crescendo effect-the huffing and puffing, the swinging back of the arm that characterises most screen fisticuffs. Hou's fights are lightning flashes from a thundery sky. They're brilliantly choreographed and photographed, too. Take the







The Time to Live and the Time to Die.

ambush scene on a dusty road as the besieged party splits up and, in long shot, the camera catches glimpses of subsidiary fights flitting in and out of view among the bullrushes.

Hou Hsiao-hsien favours the use of motifs, similar to those 'punctuation marks' that are such a marked feature of Ozu's films. In *A City of Sadness* the most recurrent is the outer reception room of the Lin family residence—a single oval table, some stained glass and beyond it the main living room, where from time to time we catch sight of important actions or hear snatches of conversation of which we would love to hear more.

The other recurring image—not exactly a punctuation mark in the Ozu sense since a great deal is always happening in it—is the entrance hall at the local hospital, run by Mr Lin's second son while he was alive and now by his widow. In the aftermath of the 28 February massacre it becomes the most important setting in town as doctors, nurses, anaesthetists rush every which way to cope with the chaos. It's one of the cinema's most persuasive accounts

of the eruption of a full-blown crisis.

Quite new in Hou's work, however, is a mastery of sound that puts him in the same league in this regard as Robert Bresson. The prison scenes, with the sound of advancing jackboots, clanging doors, off-screen gunshots, all heard against a neutral shot of the open cell door, are as disturbing as anything since *Un Condamné à mort s'est échappé*. They mark Hou Hsiao-hsien as an artist who is still extending himself.

Unlike many of his colleagues among the younger generation of Taiwan filmmakers, Hou did not gain experience abroad before entering the cinema. He enrolled in 1969 in Taipei's National Academy of Arts film and drama department, graduated in 1972 and worked for a time as an electronic calculator salesman and then as continuity boy-cum-assistant director to Li Hsing, Ch'en K'un-hou and other filmmakers. He was also a prolific scriptwriter before making his directorial debut in 1980.

None of his first three films is of any great moment. All star pop singers of

limited acting ability. Cute Girl (1980) tells of an industrialist's daughter earmarked for marriage with a man she does not love and who runs away to find romance in the countryside with the man of her choice. Cheerful Wind (1981) is only fractionally better by virtue of an amusing opening sequence that promises melodrama but proves to be a rehearsal for a film. The main plot, about a photographer's romance with a blind man while fighting off the unwelcome attentions of a film director, is vapid.

Hou's next film, with singer Kenny Bee, was the best of the three. Called *The Green, Green Grass of Home* (1982), it's the story of the arrival of a new teacher at a country school, who introduces new methods, ditches his girlfriend and strikes up a relationship with a fellow teacher. The scenes with the children have considerable spontaneity. Much of their dialogue was improvised and, at the dubbing stage, Hou used real children for the first time, instead of adults, to post-synchronise it.

The breakthrough in Hou's career came in 1983 with the production of the portmanteau film The Sandwich Mana follow-up to a similar film, In Our Time, which had proved an unexpected box-office success the previous year and in which several new film-makers were given their first chance to direct (among them Edward Yang). The Sandwich Man is taken from three stories by the writer Huang Chunming intended to convey a broad-brush portrait of Taiwanese society, rural and urban, in the years between 1962 and 1969. Hou's episode is the first-a tight, ironic tale about a provincial sandwich-man who has opted out of the rat race and is happy to make people laugh by dressing up as a clown. When a local theatre impresario suggests that he take to a motorbike and distribute leaflets instead, his small son does not recognise him and runs away in tears.

Shot, like all his early films, by the photographer/director Ch'en K'un-hou, for whom Hou also wrote scripts, The Sandwich Man lifted him clear of potboilers and allowed him from then on to make films more to his taste. The first was The Boys from Fengkuei (1983), also known as All the Youthful Days. It's a film set in the present in two contrasting parts of Taiwan-Fengkuei, a small town in the P'enghu islands, and Kaohsiung, located in the south and Taiwan's second largest city. Three young layabouts are lured to the big city and stay for a time with a relative, but a budding romantic attachment comes to nothing when the girl decides to move on to the even brighter lights of Taipei.

Seen today, the film is fascinating more for the hints it affords of the mature director still to emerge than in its own right. Though the atmosphere of the two locales is nicely contrasted, the narrative line is thin and a prolonged scene of drunkenness is frankly tedious.

An amusing antithesis is set up, however, between the movies the boys can see in the sticks and what they think they will see in Kaohsiung. In Fengkuei, the local fleapit is playing Rocco and His Brothers dubbed into American with Chinese subtitles. In Kaohsiung, a wide-boy on a bike promises them 'real' European films, uncut, in colour and wide-screen for NT\$300 a head. But when they mount the stairs the birds have flown and the Cinema-Scope screen proves to be a letter-box gap between the girders, affording only a vista over the town. The implicationthat they would have been better off staying at home-is one that becomes more explicit in Hou's later films.

The Boys from Fengkuei begins with what we would now consider a characteristic Hou shot—a bus-stop sign, with no figures to be seen, and then slowly making its way from the distance a battered old charabanc. The image looks provincial and parochial; only as the film progresses do the virtues of the simple, unhurried life begin to show through, but by then it is too late. When the boys leave for the big city, framed through a typical open door, they are leaving behind a world they can never recapture.

In this film Hou's technique made huge strides. There's a scene after the death of the father of one of the boys that skilfully uses flashbacks to underline the sense of loss. The father rises from his rocking chair, puts on his hat and goes to work and only then does the camera pan to a shot of the son sitting on the same porch years later, but now facing an empty rocking chair.

The Boys from Fengkuei, Hou's first

Dust in the Wind.

personal film, has uncanny pre-echoes of what was to come. Just before the end, there's a sequence set on the docks as the boys question what the big city has taught them. The girl they are with hangs back, dissociating herself and forming her own plans to move to Taipei. She leans against a pillar on the far right of the shot, acres of empty wide-screen before her—isolated, effectively no longer with them. Four years later, Hou repeated the shot almost exactly in *Dust in the Wind* as the boy and girl part for the last time at the railway station.

A Summer at Grandpa's, which Hou made in 1984, is his sunniest picture, a nostalgic recollection of a childhood that was very close, he says, to his own. It's his most Ozu-like film, with overtones of works like Ohayo and even of Tokyo Story. The opening scene, a prelude in which newly graduated children sing farewell to their old school, works in the same way as the emotional climax of Tokyo Story, in which the daughter glances at the watch just given her by her aunt and the sound of the children's singing carries over into the next shot. Indeed, the film resembles nothing so much as a Japanese movie from the 1950s. The empty corridors, the deserted pool tables, the station clocks, the motif of trains speeding across country bridges like some emblem of the transience of youth-all have a pronounced Japanese flavour.

The film begins with little more than a situation and develops a plot on the wing. Little Tung-Tung and his sister must spend the long summer days at grandpa's because mother is in hospital undergoing a serious operation. The

first half concentrates almost entirely on the children. There are tortoise races to see who will have the honour of swapping his pet for a wooden aeroplane, the little girl gives her sick toy lamb an injection with a parsnip to cure its ills, larks fly into nets set up to catch them. It's a world of magic and wonder and if the boys won't let their little sister bathe with them, then she can get her own back by sending their clothes downstream in the current.

But the innocence of youth is vanishing even as they live it. Tung-Tung inadvertently sees a mugging incident to which his uncle becomes an accessory; there's an unlooked-for pregnancy and much talk of sterilising the local madwoman. Grandpa takes a crowbar to the errant uncle and, unable to catch him, vents his anger on a moped. The violent and the sordid lie only just beyond the children's ken.

A Summer at Grandpa's was a dress rehearsal for The Time to Live and the Time to Die (1985), which by common consent is Hou's first masterpiece. It is the ultimate nostalgic film, a lament for a world that was hard, but perhaps wiser and happier than modern times. Closely autobiographical in many respects (including the death of the young boy's mother from throat cancer at an early age), it has a maturity and a gravity that transcend his previous work.

Notionally a rites-of-passage story like so many other Taiwanese films, it goes beyond them to attempt a full-scale analysis of the origins of modern life on the island. It is the rural, personal and intimate counterpart of what *A City of*



Sadness later achieves on the urban and political scale. The three deaths in the film-the father peacefully in a chair, the mother painfully of disease and the grandmother in squalor on a mat on the floor, rotting from the underside even before the family know she has died—are like a settling of accounts with the old Taiwan. With them pass the rustic life that Hou himself knew as a child and, by inference, the aspiration to go back to the mainland. When the father dies we learn that he would only buy bamboo furniture because he anticipated an imminent return and was persuaded only reluctantly to buy a sewing machine.

Grandma is even more adamant. She spends the whole picture thinking and talking about the great return and, as senility encroaches, it becomes her one topic of conversation. 'Where is the Mekong Bridge?' she asks a young shopgirl and gets a vacant stare in return. For the younger Taiwanese, the goals of the older generation are not merely irrelevant but incomprehensible. But grandma does make her last journey back to the mainland, if only in her mind. Her grandson leads her there down the dusty lanes of Taiwan, picking guavas from the roadside as they go. It is a poetic image of great power, crowned with the wonderful moment when grandma, wandering in mind but still in command of her senses, performs an impromptu juggling act with the guavas for her grandson.

In a film of many heart-wrenching scenes, two especially stand out-the 'requiem' in the form of a Chinese version of 'Silent Night' and the hypnotic shot three minutes and forty-two seconds long in which the mother reminisces to her daughter about her own early married life. The effect is like exorcising ghosts, calling up the past one last time so that it may rest ever after in peace. And throughout the scene torrential rain pours steadily on the verandah outside-cleansing, washing away old sorrows.

One question that arose after The Time to Live and the Time to Die, and which would have remained if he had moved straight to A City of Sadness, was whether Hou Hsiao-hsien, the exquisite chronicler of times gone by, had anything to say to modern Taiwan. That question was answered, however, by the two films he made in between-Dust in the Wind and Daughter of the Nile. They are not of equal stature. Dust in the Wind, for all its technical bravura, is in some ways a tentative work. But both confront and grasp the subject of recent times in Taiwan with alacrity. They prove that the man who has one eye fixed on the past has the other just as firmly on the present.

Dust in the Wind embodies what we can now identify as the Hou Hsiaohsien style more than any other film. Every item in his stylistic vocabulary is present in abundance. Ozu-like shots? There are dozens of them, from train signals and station clocks to empty corridors and the shot of the village hillside that acts like a parenthesis. Trains are everywhere in this film-and station platforms, shot in the kind of compositions that Ozu used in the first scene of Early Spring. And there are self-referential shots, too: like those of the hero and heroine on the platform that are virtual clones of similar ones in The Boys from Fengkuei and The Time to Live and the Time to Die.

But here they give the impression of marking time. Perhaps because this is the weakest film of his mature years. The story of a boy and girl who come to the big city, become wage-slaves and gradually drift apart as he leaves to

undergo national service in Quemoy is essentially negative. Though the film opens with a train emerging from a tunnel into the sunlight, the overall tone is relentlessly downbeat. Even when the couple converse at work it is through a grille as if they are imprisoned. The penultimate section, set on Quemoy, where the conscripts take in a family of mainland fisherfolk shipwrecked in stormy weather, introduces a welcome touch of humanity, but it comes too late and gives way to another depressing sequence in which, disappointed that his girl did not wait for him and has now married, the young boy can take comfort only with his grandfather in the raising of vegetables.

If Dust in the Wind were Hou Hsiaohsien's only recent film about later times, it might be thought to expose his limitations; but he has made another contemporary subject that dramatically extends his range and received, on the whole, less than its due when shown in Britain. Daughter of the *Nile* is a crossover picture, an art-house movie that also embraces the world of popular teenage culture. It works on several levels and stars Yang Lin, who might be described as the Taiwanese Kylie Minogue, a pretty young pup with, in the right hands, unexpected reserves of acting talent. Hou Hsiaohsien uses her to illustrate the way traditional Chinese values are crumbling in the face of an all-pervading Americulture. (In the film she works in a Kentucky Fried Chicken outlet.)

The title refers to a Japanese comic strip with which the girl identifiesdisastrously, as it happens, since she confuses her brother's hoodlum companions with idealised characters in the cartoon. The contrast between her make-believe world and the more mundane reality of modern Taipei is one of

the film's principal themes. Hou's film is about a society in transition and, to some extent, living on illusions. The big unspoken theme, that is nevertheless handled obliquely, is the question of establishing what is real and achievable in a country whose sights have traditionally been set on restoring the status quo of more than forty years ago. Hou's vision of life in modern Taipei is dark, but lightened again by nostalgia for the values of the past. So the movie alternates between the violence of the action scenes—as sudden and intense as those in A City of Sadness-and the calm in which nothing seems to be happening and the camera simply records the pace of everyday life as Vittorio De Sica used to do in, say, Umberto D. Where A City of Sadness takes risks by turning the spotlight on a murky area that many would doubtless prefer to leave obscure, Daughter of the Nile in an indirect way spells out the dangers of self-delusion. In the rapidly changing Taiwan of 1990, that is perhaps no less daring an achievement.





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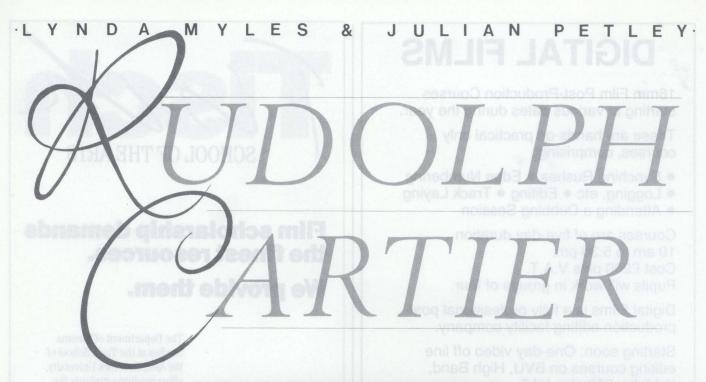
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Ask anyone 'Who made Quatermass series?' and the the odds are that you will be told 'Nigel Kneale'. Talk to Nigel Kneale, however, and he will immediately stress the vital creative role of the producerdirector Rudolph Cartier. The two men also worked on both BBC versions of Wuthering Heights (1953 and 62), 1984 (1954) and The Creature (1955); but today, undoubtedly, it is Kneale who remains the better known. Start investigating Cartier's career, however, and one soon discovers a major figure of British television drama with more than 120 productions to his credit. So who is Rudolph Cartier and why is he not better known?

Cartier was born in 1904 in Vienna. He studied to be an architect, but harboured desires of becoming a film director or, even better, an opera director. When he was 19, Cartier attended a master class set up by Max Reinhardt in Vienna. It was

a formative moment and Cartier describes Reinhardt as 'a hypnotic personality'. 'When he directed you, you had only to look into his eyes to know what he wanted.' Fired with an enthusiasm for films, Cartier submitted a script suggestion to a Berlin company. It was accepted and he arrived in Berlin in 1929.

Cartier's first script was *Der Tiger*, on which he collaborated with Egon Eis, who was to become a regular writing partner. 'We became famous as the first screenwriters of talkie crime stories. Anyone who wanted to make a crime story came to us.' In all, Cartier worked on some dozen scripts. They included *Das Gelbe Haus des King-Fu* (1931), directed by Karl Grune; *Der Zinker* (1931), an Edgar Wallace adaptation; *Die Pranke* (1931), directed by Hans



Steinhoff; E. A. Dupont's Salto Mortale (1931); and Tropennächte (1931), an adaptation of Conrad's Victory, which is interesting in the light of Cartier's later literary adaptations for the BBC.

He also co-directed Teilnehmer Antwortet Nicht (1932) and directed Unsichtbare Gegner (1933), which was photographed by Eugen Schüfftan and produced by Sam Spiegel. 'I was the first person who was employed by the famous, or infamous, Sam Spiegel. He promised to take me and two of the stars of the film—Peter Lorre and Oskar Homolka—to Hollywood. He took them, but he left me behind.'

At least two of the films on which Cartier worked, Schuss im Morgen-grauen (1932) and Stern von Valencia (1933), were made for UFA, and Cartier's closest colleagues at this time were

Emeric Pressburger and Billy Wilder. By 1935, however, Cartier felt unable to continue living and working in Germany. Asked how he feels now about the Weimar period, he replies philosophically, 'It was wonderful while it lasted, but it came to an end, and one cannot reconstitute it like powdered egg.'

Cartier came to Britain in 1936, but for various reasons was unable to work in the film industry here. After the war, however, he re-established contact with the reconstituted German film industry and once again began working on scripts. By chance this led him to the BBC. One dark night I went into the old Charing Cross post office to catch the midnight post to Germany, and sheltering in the doorway from the rain was a young chap whom I recognised as a literary agent.

'We started talking, and he asked me why I never did anything for television. I told him it

was because I had no contacts at the BBC. He arranged a meeting with Michael Barry who, together with Val Gielgud, was head of BBC television drama. I briefed myself by watching lots of television. I had also been to America in 1949 to study how they made films and television programmes over there. When Michael Barry asked my opinion of British television drama, I told him I thought it was terrible. I said that the BBC needed new scripts, a new approach, a whole new spirit, rather than endlessly televising classics like Dickens or familiar London stage plays.'

Cartier submitted a German story called *Arrow to the Heart*. This was accepted, and his production went out (live of course, in those days) on 20 July 1952, and again four days later. The

story of an army padre who comforts a young deserter on the night before his execution, it clearly prefigures Losey's King and Country. Cartier's choice of a non-British source for his first production is significant, in that one of the hallmarks of his originality in terms of British television drama is his penchant, right from the start, for continental literary sources-Schnitzler (Liebelei), Zuckmayer (The Devil's General, The Cold Light, The Captain from Köpenick), Hochwälder (The Public Prosecutor), Anouilh (The Vale of Shadows), Brecht (Mother Courage and Her Children), Tolstoy (Anna Karenina), Sudermann (Midsummer Fire), Dumas fils (The Lady of the Camelias), Sartre (The Respectful Prostitute) and Chekhov (The Proposal).

It's also interesting that Cartier followed Arrow to the Heart with two productions on supernatural themes: The Dybbuk, based on the famous Jewish ghost story, and Portrait of Peter Perowne, whose life-after-death plot makes for an interesting comparison with A Matter of Life and Death. As Cartier himself says, 'I became something of an expert on fantasy and science fiction.'

There followed not only the obvious examples of the Quatermass serials and 1984, but The Creature (a fascinating piece about the Abominable Snowman, later made into a Hammer film); two contributions to the $Out\ of\ the\ Unknown$ series (Level Seven and The Naked Sun); and one to the Late Night Horror series (The Triumph of Death). And although not exactly supernatural, plays such as Rebecca, Sorry, Wrong Number, Thunder Rock, The Frog, Wuthering Heights and The Survivors (Cartier's contribution to the excellent but now seemingly forgotten series Thirteen Against Fate) all contained decidedly creepy and disturbing ele-



Anna Sten in E.A. Dupont's Salto Mortale (1931), from a Cartier script.

After his fourth television play, Cartier was asked by Cecil McGivern, Controller of Programmes at BBC Television, to join the staff on a permanent basis. 'Nothing could have been more welcome, because I wanted a permanent job whatever the salary. I wanted a continuous flow of work, and I made this one of the terms of my contract. I also stipulated that the BBC would accept all my suggestions for plays, money permitting. So they swallowed these very tough terms and offered me a salary which worked out at £18 a week. They increased it when my came along.

And they were so ashamed of what they

had offered me that, whenever I had a

ments, often of a rather 'Gothic' nature.

successful production, McGivern wrote me a very nice letter offering me a bonus of £60. Anyway, from this point on I was in continuous work with the BBC for 23 years.'

Cartier and Kneale met when the latter lent a hand with the script of Arrow to the Heart, but their collaboration really took off with The Quatermass Experiment, which was also the first original teleplay on which Cartier worked. The Quatermass story is too well known to bear repeating here (see, for example, Primetime, Winter 1984/5, and the Monthly Film Bulletin, March 1989), but it's worth noting Cartier's remarkable generosity to Kneale: 'He had all three stories in his mind from

The Quatermass Experiment: Reginald Tate (left) as the first Professor Quatermass.



the start. We decided to do *Experiment* first because we thought it would give us less trouble with exteriors and things like that. They were all born in Kneale's mind, and I had nothing to add to them. The writer is more important than the director; the director can only interpret. I can only say that I would have been nothing without Nigel Kneale.'

A look at the way in which Cartier directs the remarkable film inserts in Quatermass II, which were shot in a Shell refinery on the Thames Estuary, makes one realise that he is being decidedly over-modest here—and, incidentally, points up the extent of Val Guest's 'borrowings' in the Hammer film version. His comment that, 'If one has a story of fantasy or science fiction, one must believe in it and try to make it credible for audiences, rather than make fun of it,' goes some way to explaining the series' remarkable power to unsettle and disturb.

After the success of *The Quatermass Experiment*, Cartier was summoned to McGivern's office and asked whether he would like to have a go at 1984. 'Since it was such an important subject, Kneale was given a whole year to prepare the script. But nobody guessed that it would have such an impact. After the first transmission, the BBC received threatening phone calls about me, so for the repeat they engaged two burly bouncers to guard me in the studio.

We thought that after all the fuss over the first transmission we would get an enormous audience for the repeat, but it was actually very small. Everyone who had wanted to see it did so the first time round. The BBC even wondered whether it should do the repeat at all, but then Prince Philip made a speech at the Royal Society of Arts saying that he and the Queen had watched it and liked it and couldn't understand what the



1984: Harry Lane, Wilfrid Brambell, Peter Cushing, Campbell Gray.

fuss was about. So that was all right, and the BBC decided there should be no cuts in the repeat.

'I suppose it was a bit tough for the public in those days, especially the torture scenes, but the critics in their stupidity made far too much of the live rats. In fact the rats kept falling asleep under the heat of the lights, so when it came to the all-important shot of them in the helmet their keeper had to prod them into some sort of activity. As we had 17 different sets but only one studio, I had to arrange for filmed inserts when the camera was moving from one set to another. Next to the studio were the remnants of an old exhibition from 1925, all ruins and pools of water—

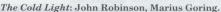
that's where we shot the scenes in the Prole Quarter. Similarly, in *Quatermass II* we shot some of the scenes in the alien base underneath the studios, amid all the heating equipment.'

1984 was a landmark in television drama production, in terms of its scope and scale and its engagement with serious contemporary issues. It was also one of the first occasions that the BBC got into trouble with MPS and the self-appointed guardians of public morality in the daily press, run-ins which have since become boringly familiar.

Five Tory MPS tabled a motion deploring 'The tendency evident in recent BBC television programmes, notably on Sunday evenings, to pander to sexual and sadistic tastes.' The Daily Mirror fulminated: 'There was no moral in this nauseating story, which held out no hope for the future that could justify its being shown on television.' Meanwhile, a Daily Express headline alleged: 'Wife Dies As She Watches', and the Daily Sketch shrieked: 'Tortures On TV Start Biggest Protest Storm.' Sounds depressingly familiar nearly forty years later, doesn't it?

In those days of live television drama, there were about three weeks of rehearsals without cameras for each play. 'As we only had one studio capable of doing live television,' explains Cartier, 'the producer of the Sunday play could have only a day and a half of rehearsal with the cameras, from Saturday lunchtime till 10 p.m., and from Sunday morning till shortly before transmission time.

It was an absolute nightmare going out live. The actors were sometimes terrified, and you never knew what was going to happen next, like a camera breaking down. It was particularly difficult for me, as I was known for vast subjects with large crowds. There was always a breakdown caption standing by. This live business had a great deal





to do with Equity, who wouldn't let the BBC pre-film anything but out-of-doors scenes. I finally broke the Equity spell when I did *Mother Courage* with Flora Robson. She was unwilling to do a continuous live performance, so we had to pre-record some of her scenes in the studio. Someone denounced us to Equity, there was an expensive court case and the BBC had to pay compensation. After that, however, the situation was changed to enable pre-filming to take place in the studio.'

Live transmissions were not the only bugbear of television drama's early days: 'Our budgets were ridiculous. The biggest I had then was £3,000 for 1984. But there was no money for musicians, so I went on bended knees and asked for another £200, which I got. There was no particular policy about what could or couldn't be adapted; I could purchase and put on whatever I wanted, the only limitations were financial.' But, money or no money, Cartier's output was by today's standards phenomenal. For example, in 1953 he put on five plays (all of which were repeated) and six episodes of The Quatermass Experiment; in 1954 ten plays (four of which were repeated); and the following year six plays (with three repeats), six episodes of Quatermass II, and so on.

Cartier was also among the first to attempt opera on television, perhaps not surprising considering the copious and dramatic use of music which he made in many of his plays. He had always wanted to do *Turandot* on television, but in fact his first TV opera was Menotti's *The Saint of Bleecker Street*, followed by *Othello*, *Tobias and the Angel*, *Carmen* and *The Bear*.

There is a good deal more to Cartier's contribution to television drama than simply elaborate mise en scène. I stressed the importance of new scripts, and also new actors, who, incidentally, aren't always as expensive as the old ones. It was important in those days to find a style that got away from the stage. Television should go right into the actors' hearts and minds. Unlike in the theatre, the audience wants to see what is going on in the actor's face. I'd tell the actors that no matter how successful they had been in a play on the stage, when that play was done for television it was something new and they must find new ways of acting it. But I never told them how to act, only what to feel. It's no good if a director tries to be an actor himself and to influence the acting style of his cast.'

Certainly, some remarkable televisual performances are among the many rewards of watching Cartier's productions. For example, Marius Goring as a scientist clearly based on Klaus Fuchs in *The Cold Light*; Peter Cushing in 1984; André Morell in Quatermass and the Pit; Sean Connery and Claire Bloom in Anna Karenina (not long before Connery became James Bond); and most notably Joseph Furst and Anton Diffring in Dr Korczak and the Children, a real tour-de-force of acting and direction and, as Cartier accurately



Quatermass and the Pit: André Morell (Quatermass), Cec Linder.

describes it, 'the first television play without scenery, without costumes and without props.' Intriguingly, the subject has now been filmed by Andrzej Wajda, in a production in which the BBC was co-producer.

As drama developed in the 1960s towards what we would now think of as TV films (the BBC's devotion to the term 'play' notwithstanding), Cartier's output inevitably slowed down. Productions such as Stalingrad and Lee Oswald—Assassin, however, show him taking full advantage of the flexibility offered by pre-recording to deliver something far closer to a 'film for television' than the traditional idea of a 'BBC drama'. His location work on the Z Cars episode Scare (a Liverpudlian Panic in the Streets) and the Maigret story The Golden Fleece, set in atmospheric Parisian

Stalingrad: Edward Ogden, Ian Colin.



canalside locations, also display a decidedly cinematic sensibility.

As early as 1958, writing in Films and Filming, Cartier was looking with considerable insight into the future relationship of cinema and television: 'TV films have developed into a marketable commodity which can be sold to different transmitters, as they fit easily into the various gaps between bigger TV events. Whether they will, one day, become the sole food of the rapacious TV screens remains to be seen. It is possible that through improvements in film transmission (no film is yet as crisp and clear on the TV screen as a 'live' broadcast), merging of financial interests, and pay-as-you-see TV, a gradual rapprochement between the now bitterly opposed camps will take place; and larger screens and colour TV (which is not so far away as one might imagine) will help to that end.' Of contemporary productions which he himself would like to have done, he names The Mahabharata and Edge of Darkness, beside which, 'everything else new seems very small.'

If Cartier's work is less well known today than it ought to be, this may partly be because of the continuing ascendancy of what one might call the Loach/Garnett/Sydney Newman school of television drama in critical histories. Another reason is the invisibility of so many of his productions. Most of those which survive do so in murky 35mm prints, making it difficult to gauge their visual style-though stills and frame enlargements suggest an almost UFAlike quality of chiaroscuro. And much of Cartier's work has literally vanished, lost or destroyed over the years, along with so much else from the television output of the period.

There will be a season of Rudolph Cartier's work at the National Film Theatre in June.

N Н K NE Michael Moore.

In 1986, Michael Moore, a well-known political journalist, was fired as editor of Mother Jones, the United States' most popular left-liberal magazine. A native of Flint, Michigan, home to numerous General Motors plants, Moore was concerned by the economic disaster facing his hometown in the wake of GM's plant closures and decided to make a film about Flint, focusing on GM Chairman of the Board Roger Smith, whom he saw as responsible for Flint becoming America's unemployment capital. He sold his house, held bingo games, and eventually raised \$160,000 to make his film.

The rest, as they say, is history. Roger & Me was the biggest hit at the Telluride, Toronto and New York film festivals in 1989, and Moore was able to get a \$3m distribution deal with Warner Brothers, unheard of for a documentary, rave reviews across North America, and citations on dozens of

critical 'Best of the Year' lists.

Then came the backlash. Various Michigan newspapers attacked the accuracy of Roger & Me, pointing out that Moore had played extremely fast and loose in the film with the chronology of events. Examples included the visit to Flint of Ronald Reagan, which happened in 1980, not in the wake of the plant closures as the film suggests, and the strange efforts of the city fathers to promote Flint as a tourist centre (Autoworld, the Hyatt hotel, the Water Street Pavilion), most of which had been born, lived and died before the 1986-87 plant closures.

Moore's response to the charges of manipulation was twofold. First, he says that the film never states that anything happened in any particular chronological order, and all the events did happen and were a part of Flint's decline. But his narration uses words like 'then' and 'meanwhile', creating a phantom chronology which has little to do with facts. Second, he claims that he wanted to make a 'movie', not a 'documentary'. This puts Moore on very thin ice indeed, as well as depriving him of potential allies in the documentary film

community.

The rock that started the avalanche was the long, defensive interview Moore gave the then editor of Film Comment Harlan Jacobson. Even as he attacks Moore's chronological deviousness, however, Jacobson is lavish in his praise of the film, calling it 'glitteringly smart in analysis and arrestingly right in essence.

As a portrait of the economic devastation that can be wrought by malignant corporate management, Roger & Me has few parallels in the American cinema. The endless shots of empty, boarded-up stores, the scenes of families being evicted from their homes, the staggering indifference of the rich and the mute suffering of the poor testify to the fact of Flint's destruction by malign neglect. The most fascinating element of Roger & Me is the character of Fred

Ross, the Flint sheriff whose job, day in and day out, is to evict people behind on their rent or mortgages. That someone like Ross, whose job is to throw people into the street, even on Christmas Eve, can be the most sympathetic character in a hit film says something strange and powerful about the aftermath of the Reagan era's systematic plundering of the American economy.

More important, though, is Moore's claim that he wanted to make an entertainment movie rather than a 'documentary'. One can see the effect in his selection of cinematic models. One can see a kinship with documentarian Errol Morris, director of The Thin Blue Line, Gates of Heaven and Vernon Florida, in Moore's gift for finding characters who seem grotesque or bizarre. But Morris is a director with a profound sympathy for the most grotesque characters in his films. He sits down with them and draws them out, so that finally their humanity overwhelms the audience's sense of their oddity. Truth emerges from his patience. Had Morris decided to document a city in decay, the voices of the mute victims would have been heard loud and clear. Instead, Roger & Me's odd loose ends, such as the woman who raises rabbits and sells them for 'meat or pets', seem grotesque rather than human.

A closer model might have been found in Tony Buba, whose Lightning Over Braddock: A Rustbowl Fantasy offers a not dissimilar portrait of a town in decline (Braddock, Pennsylvania, deserted by the steel industry). But Buba's film is more deceptive, more self-aware, and much funnier. It is only halfway through Lightning Over Braddock that the audience begins to realise that what is on the screen cannot possibly be a documentary, but must be fiction. With extraordinary wit, Buba never quite lets one figure out which parts of the film are which. (His complex disregard for transgenre boundaries is doubtless one reason why Buba remains America's most obscure great film-maker.)

Instead, Moore's model is Frank Capra; and, as in Capra himself, this creates a certain degree of intellectual dishonesty in Moore's portrait of Flint, a dishonesty which has nothing to do with the chronology of events created, but with Moore's mode of self-presentation and the way that he situates himself as the narrator.

Moore presents himself as a big, goofy, aw-shucks kind of guy, who doesn't quite know what he's doing and is driven by a hometown idealism. (Essentially, he's Garrison Keillor with a political edge.) Scene after scene presents Moore this way. There are the sequences when he simply shows up at the Grosse Pointe Yacht Club, or at General Motors' head offices in Detroit, asking to see Roger Smith and being rejected-at GM, while trying to find some identification for a security guard, he admits (on the voiceover) that he has no business cards, so he presents the guard with his Chuck E. Cheese (a fastfood restaurant) discount card.

When he discusses his stint at Mother Jones, Moore implies that he was fired by the publisher for putting an unemployed autoworker on the cover of the magazine, rather than doing an investigation of herbal teas. Warner Brothers' press kit states, however, that he was fired for refusing to run an article critical of the Sandinista government of Nicaragua. The mode in which Moore presents himself, as an idealistic son of the Middle West taking on Corporate America-see his remarks about San Francisco, where he had trouble adapting to a city 'where you couldn't find non-dairy creamer'-is a position that casts him as a Capra hero. He's Mr Smith trying to build his boys' camp, Mr Deeds trying to give his money away to the downtrodden. And like those characters, he is the only one allowed moral or intellectual authority. If we look at the choices he makes throughout the film, we can see this pattern.

When Moore talks about the people from his hometown he admires, he mentions those who left: Pat Boone, gameshow host Bob Eubanks (both appear in the film) and actor Don Knotts, all of whom are cultural jokes to a sophisticated urban audience. He mentions the popular folksinger Harry Chapin, a Flint native who for several years before his death lent financial support to Moore's newspaper, the

Michigan Voice.

As in a Capra movie, the world is divided into the rapacious, manipulative and indifferent rich (the enemies of Deeds, Smith, Doe) and the suffering little people, who become the object of Deeds/Smith's messianic impulses. Were there no rich people who articulated concern about the destruction of Flint? And with the very brief exception of an angry young black autoworker, no unemployed workers are allowed to say anything except, 'I hate Roger Smith.' Where are the articulate union members, the community organisers, the people who fought the plant closures? They are notably absent, because they would interfere with the film-maker/ hero's claim to be in sole possession of the truth

All Moore wants is to take Roger Smith to Flint and show him the devastation, hoping no doubt that, like the villains in a Capra movie, Smith will be struck dumb by guilt and bring back the auto plants.

I think not. Moore spent ten years in Michigan as a political journalist. He was hired to edit Mother Jones, and had appeared as a commentator on American Public Radio and in numerous magazines. He is, shall we say, not as dumb as he looks. Indeed, he gives every indication of being highly intelligent. But everything about the film suggests that the last thing he wanted was an interview with Roger Smith.

One of the rejections faced repeatedly by Moore and his small camera crew boils down to: 'We don't have to talk to you. You don't represent anybody.' That is, he is a journalist without portfolio, with credentials from no newspaper, magazine or television station. A business card is an effective, inexpensive and easily acquired weapon. (I'm not some slick media type, says his posture, but a man of the people seeking the truth.) This is a guarantee that he will be denied access. Michael Moore is not stupid, and he must have known that without any accreditation he would not get his interview. Moore was not an unknown. He could have got an affiliation with the Public Broadcasting System or an independent television station-all it would have taken was a promise to share footage of the Smith interview

An interview with Roger Smith, that bland, plump face speaking anything resembling the truth about multinational corporations, would have queered any chance for commercial success. It would have limited the exhibition of the film to labour film festivals and educational television.

Moore is not acting, I think, in bad faith. But he has, quite naturally, internalised that peculiarly American way of looking at the world which elevates the personal over the social, the individual over the systemic and the local over the universal. Thus Flint's destruction and General Motors' departure are seen as the disease rather than as a symptom of the multinational corporation's status as a sort of shadow state. He speaks of General Motors' abandonment of its American manufacturing facilities and pressures on its American workers as if this were somehow outrageous and unusual, when it is in fact what multinational corporations do all the time.

Moore sacrifices analysis for the sake of an audience. His brief and cogent look at the economics of GM's departure from Flint for the cheap labour and lax labour laws of Mexico comes at the beginning of the film, after the humorous autobiographical material. The audience remembers the woman with the rabbits, the baleful realism of Sheriff Fred Ross, Moore's encounters with the gatekeepers of the privileged, and the appalling joke told by Bob Eubanks, which manages in sixteen words to be sexist, anti-Semitic, homophobic and medically inaccurate.

A documentary film that questioned and criticised in more direct terms the functions of corporate capitalism in contemporary society would not have been acquired by Warner Brothers, which is, since the merger with Time, part of the largest entertainment conglomerate in the world. By limiting himself to the death of one town by the actions of one company, easily personified by its chief executive officer, Moore has made a film which fails because it is ultimately harmless.



Grazyna Szapolowska (Magda), Olaf Lubaszenko (Tomek).

HEARTBURN A SHORT FILM ABOUT LOVE

After some two and a half millennia, art continues to relish the challenge presented by Aristotle's theory of the dramatic unities. If playwrights and story-tellers will not quite go the whole hog with Racine and Corneille, concentrating everything into a single intensely charged narrative episode, the appeal of the reductive principle, the action stripped to its ineluctable essentials, the work of art as bouillon cube or vitamin capsule, endures untarnished.

Krzysztof Kieslowski's A Short Film About Love (Gala) is powerfully Aristotelian. Apart from three brief interventions by minor characters, the cast numbers only four and the action is exclusively located on a housing estate with its adjacent post office. The entire focus of the narrative is restricted to a single theme, and there are no concessions to decorative detail or attempts at creating a perspective for the protagonists beyond what we absolutely need to know in order to comprehend their motives, energies and illusions.

Tomek, desultorily studying Portuguese between stints as a postal worker, has become obsessed with thirty-year-old. Magda who lives in the opposite apartment. Punctually at eight o'clock each night, when she returns home, he trains his telescope on her uncurtained windows, watching her dressing and undressing, the visits of her lovers and the sudden fluctuations in her mood.

At the post office he purloins her letters and at home he plagues her with heavy-breathing telephone calls. A yet bolder stratagem, calculated to interrupt the lovemaking caught in the frame of Tomek's jaundiced surveillance, brings in the gasman to repair the leak he has reported in Magda's kitchen. The chance for direct confrontation arrives

when he gets himself a milk-round delivering bottles to her door.

When at length Tomek confesses all, in an ice-cream parlour where there is no ice-cream, and Magda takes him home, her response to his ardour is witheringly cynical. It is Tomek's attempted suicide which turns her into the watcher, scanning his window with a pair of opera glasses and pleading for scraps of news from his landlady, who herself has been observing the crucial meeting of the pair through the telescope

Though Kieslowski has described himself as 'closest to the positions verging on realism', invoking the Italians, the Czechs and American cinema of the late 30s, the selective precision of this film effectively distances it from any such inspirations. The apartment block, one of those mournful East European concrete carcasses stained by rain and grime, is transfigured by Tomek's fantasy, as is Magda herself (the name has classic femme fatale overtones, handsomely emphasised by Grazvna Szapolowska's portrayal), whom the camera envisages as a slightly overblown Pre-Raphaelite siren, coddled within an affluence contrasted significantly with the drab interiors inhabited by the boy and his landlady.

Beautifully played by Stefania Iwinska, the latter becomes a figure of sibylline knowingness and resignation, her lopsided features lined with sardonic intelligence. Her counterpart in balancing the central couple is Magda's lover Roman (Piotr Machalica), seedy, dishevelled and ultimately incapable of seeing off his persistent rival.

As Tomek, Olaf Lubaszenko heightens our sense of the film as essentially an essay in romanticism. Thickset and puffy-faced, he projects a graceless ordinariness made vulnerable by innocence. His voyeurism is sad and hankering rather than gleefully lip-smacking, the

half-comic, half-wretched passion of the swineherd for the princess. Only by rejecting it does Magda shed her sophistication and begin to understand.

Imaginative lighting does all, or nearly all. Kieslowski is clearly captivated by chiaroscuro tricks, flinging together veils of hostile, enveloping shadow and sudden, glaring fields of light, lamps in corridors, by bedsides, over doors and washbasins, the garish illumination of the apartment seen lurid and gleaming through the window, and the gloom of the poky little box from which Tomek peers inside it. Only daylight, muffled and discreet, seems radically out of touch with the prevailing mood.

Lovesickness is not something on which the late twentieth-century imagination chooses very often to dwell. In the cinema it has been either intolerably sentimentalised or else rendered absurd, so as to ward off embarrassment of an all too recognisable variety. Thus it requires a certain courage to direct the thrust of any narrative so entirely towards dignifying adolescent calf-love and humbling the beloved in the process. The cliché of older-womaneducates-younger-man is remorselessly stood on its head as Magda acknowledges the formulaic staleness at the heart of her scornful dismissal of Tomek's sincerity.

Like its predecessor, A Short Film About Killing, this is part of a sequence on the Ten Commandments. Which commandment is applicable here? Is it the one about covetousness or the prohibition of graven images? It doesn't matter that much. With or without its Biblical point of reference, Kieslowski's new film is a taut, sombre little masterpiece.

JONATHAN KEATES

Olaf Lubaszenko (Tomek).





It might seem remarkable for Burkina Faso, one of the poorest countries in Africa, to have a film industry, and yet five Burkinabe films were shown at the recent Pan African film festival. And it is not in any way to detract from Idrissa Ouedraogo's Yaaba (Oasis) to suggest that it has partly attracted international attention on this score. The other source of Yaaba's appeal, however, is its capacity to evoke universal truths by recounting simple events and so to transcend the confines of village, state or even continent.

The 'Yaaba' or grandmother of the title is honorary-'No one has ever called me that before,' she says to young Bila who gives her this affectionate nickname. They are not related. Indeed. Yaaba is a village outcast, a wizened, sun-dried old woman who keeps her distance from the cluster of mud huts that form Bila's village and who is widely believed to be a witch of some kind. Ignoring their families' injunctions to stay clear, Bila and his cousin Nopoko strike up a friendship with the old lady which is based on the special empathy that often arises between the very old and the very young. This friendship stands them in good stead when, after a fight with some other children, Nopoko is stabbed with a rusty knife and contracts tetanus. Through Bila's intercession, Yaaba is finally allowed, after other remedies have failed, to introduce her friend the healer to the village and Nopoko is cured.

Of course, part of the fear she inspires is fear of her knowledge, which derives both from her age and her habitation. Hovering just outside the village that excludes her, she is well placed to see the comings and goings others do not see. In particular, the fact that Kougri has become exasperated with her alcoholic husband and has finally succumbed to the advances of Razougou. Everyone knows she owed her husband loyalty, but 'we should not judge her,' says Yaaba, 'she has her reasons.' In this way, the old woman becomes an other worldly presence, a serene contrast to the domestic interactions in the village which, though they are observed with considerable affection and humour, are essentially trivial: the women usually retire in mock offence to their huts until they get their own way.

Much of the village business in fact concerns matters of life and death, the arranging of marriages, a wedding party, the fear that Nopoko may die, yet all these things are made relative by Yaaba's distant and somehow timeless overview. The film is structured in such a way as to suggest the cycle of life, death and renewal. It opens and closes with the identical shot of children run-

ning away from the camera across the dusty landscape, a shot which at the beginning of the film is followed, and at the end is preceded, by an episode where they tend a grave. The fact that at the end of the film the grave is Yaaba's points not to the end of the lifecycle so much as the end of the narrative, the implication being that there is a resemblance between film-maker and Yaaba that is based on distance or wisdom or both.

This, in turn, introduces another aspect of Yaaba which is both worrying and appealing. Ouedraogo's slightly distanced and affectionate view of his compatriots may be explained by the fact that he is already in his mid-thirties (not a beginner, therefore) but, more important, by the long training that took him first to Kiev and later to the IDHEC film school in Paris. Like many other African film-makers-Ousmane Sembène springs to mind-he has benefited from the cultural aid with which France has bolstered her postimperialist presence in Africa. Furthermore, Ouedraogo was not merely trained in France, but he also raised the money for this film from European, and especially Swiss, sources, something for which he has been strongly criticised by other African film-makers. This has simultaneously ensured adequate distribution for Yaaba and allowed it production values acceptable to European cinema and television.

But it has also made the film strangely anachronistic. Watching *Yaaba* is like opening one of Jean de Brunhoff's stories of Babar the Elephant and seeing the colonial experience schema-

tised, sanitised and narrated with affectionate comedy for the amusement of European children. There, as it were, are all the trappings we expect: the oasis, the river to bathe in, the circular houses built from mud, the costumes, the dances, the old lady who is both faith healer and guru. It is the studied innocence, above all, which is part of the charm of both this film and of Babar, lifting them both literally outside time.

There is something both very accomplished and very odd about a capacity to look at one's own country so dispassionately and to adopt the style and manners of an outsider. The literary genre was popular in the eighteenth century and *Yaaba* is a not too distant descendant of it, hence the classicism of its narrative. However, in this case the relationship between looker and looked-at is not neutral, for in order to portray his people thus Ouedraogo has had to adopt the coloniser's point of view

Are we therefore to assimilate the film-maker and the wise old woman, as the film implies, making the observer's point of view one of knowledge to which the youngsters aspire? Conversely, do we consider that the African film-maker has a particularly contradictory role to play in attempting to valorise the simple and the universal by means of the most sophisticated of tools? Looked at in this way *Yaaba* becomes an even more fascinating film, both a moving and accomplished narrative of life in a poor African village and a poignant image of modernisation.

JILL FORBES







Remoulding Speke's deathmask: Patrick Bergin (Richard Burton), centre.

SOURCES AND SEARCHES MOUNTAINS OF THE MOON

For a director as contemporary, as intimist, as Bob Rafelson, the large-scale historical adventure of Mountains of the Moon looks like the kind of film that gets made when nothing more personal can find support. Except that Mountains of the Moon (Guild) more closely corresponds to what Rafelson does when he isn't making films, being himself, if not an explorer of Richard Burton's ilk, an inveterate tramper-off into remote regions. From which, conceivably, he returns to make films that indirectly reflect his findings: into the 'sources' of character, of identity, of the way people fit with the world (Rafelson's films have always been about spiritual ecology, which still makes him more in tune with 60s drop-out cinema than anything currently 'green').

Rafelson flits in and out of cinema—rather the norm for directors these days—and has turned this to advantage. His oblique, elliptical approach makes puzzles out of what would otherwise be straightforward genre pieces, while the sense that he is cutting in from the outside, or cutting at a subject from within and without simultaneously, is probably the best way to express the awkwardness of fit that his characters feel with everything around them.

Mountains of the Moon, then, might contain a lot more of Rafelson than usually gets on the screen, though it must be said in the context of a genre that is notoriously difficult to cut one's way into and out of. It tells of Burton's mid-nineteenth-century expeditions to find the source of the Nile, his traversing of the African continent with John

Hanning Speke, a hunter, adventurer and more amateur geographer, the apparent triumph of their quest (though not to Burton's satisfaction), then a falling-out, a scientific dispute leading to a spiritual parting and apparent suicide.

Ironically, if the result had been more contained in the Burton-Speke relationship, it would have been more recognisably a Rafelson film. But what he wanted to put on film this time was as much the wanderlust as the intellectual enquiry or the destructive partnership. The narrative sprawls in the usual epic fashion—though largely without the usual epic excitements. Instead it's the story of a long journey, made up of encounters with various tribes curious about, or hostile or indifferent to the strangers.

It could have been a documentary about one of Rafelson's own fact- or self-finding trips, into which all the historical narrative has been fed as so much research material or background. The two men were engaged in a bold venture to discover something 'new', something which once found would turn out to have been part of someone else's way of life for hundreds of years—and the film contains both these points without making much of them, or agonising over the colonial experience.

Which is in many ways an advantage, although it does leave one wondering at times if one is watching *Sanders of the River* or *Cobra Verde*. The problem is that in incorporating so much background, and so many of the epic adventure (and travelogue) values without

their plot priorities, Rafelson doesn't make it easy to get to grips with Burton and Speke themselves. The two men seem to keep slipping between a historical and a contemporary focus, and initially their partnership and expedition seems to make most sense if seen in terms of other Rafelson models.

Like Stay Hungry: Speke (Iain Glen) is the aristocratic dilettante who left home at seventeen to wander the globe in search of his place until meeting his Arnold Schwarzenegger in Richard Burton (Patrick Bergin), man of mission but also someone who (as Omar Sharif says, in one of those unbilled epic cameos) enjoys the days of his life. The tension between a character who defines himself in terms of interior qualities, and another who loses himself in exterior ones, is a prime Rafelson metaphor, and it serves this history in interesting ways.

As the search becomes harder, and the Burton-Speke expedition becomes more depleted, the two men begin going in different directions. Burton's interest in the source of the Nile wanes, and he grows content to spend time with the people they meet en route, to understand their ways; he becomes, in short, the kind of anthropologist the twentieth century would accept, while Speke, fired with ambition if not scientific curiosity, wants to press on. Eventually, Burton is ensnared by his human interests (a power struggle with a local chief over a slave he has freed), while Speke on his own finds the source of the Nile in Lake Victoria—or finds a lake which he calls Victoria and declares is the source of the Nile

This being the kind of adventure it is, however, the metaphor is diffused by other things. There's a male-bonding theme, for instance, which goes with the rigours of the trip—each man is afflicted and has to be nursed back to health by the other. And if this doesn't lend a homoerotic quality to the Burton-Speke partnership, it does give a curious 'turn' to the falling-out between the two men, an edge of romantic pique to the scientific and intellectual issues.

At this stage also, a solid, oldfashioned villain comes to the fore, the publisher Oliphant (a new-old villain, with Richard E. Grant in another parody of Thatcherite enterprise), who fosters the discord between Burton and Speke for profit. This has the disappointing effect of reducing the failure of their partnership to external rather than internal causes, but then it's in the London scenes generally that Rafelson's instincts go astray. There is, simply, no sense of anthropology here to match the African scenes; no social crosssectioning as in Stay Hungry or metaphoric gamesmanship as in The King of Marvin Gardens. Whichever way it's cut, this remains stiff, tophatted period dressing.

RICHARD COMBS



FOR THE UNION DEAD

GLORY

Still shaky from his experiences at Antietam, the Civil War's bloodiest battle, Major Shaw covers his pride and misgivings at being offered the colonelcy of the 54th Massachusetts Infantry, the Union Army's first black regiment, by blurting his acceptance and then hurrying from the room. The assembled dignitaries, including the whiskery Frederick Douglass, look distinctly relieved. The formation of the regiment was to be a strategic psychological blow to the Confederacy; no one, however, expected the 54th to see action—but then no one reckoned with the patrician Robert Gould Shaw.

Glory (Columbia Tri-Star) is on one level a straightforward regimental record candied-up by Hollywood. Consider the climax, the suicidal assault on Fort Wagner, upon which the defence of Charleston depends. Who will carry the colours if the standard-bearer falls, Shaw asks. A young man steps forward, the colonel's boyhood friend, an enlisted man from whom Shaw felt obliged to keep his distance. They are as they were before. 'I'll see you in the fort, Thomas.'

John Ford might have cast the young Henry Fonda as Shaw. Edward Zwick, a TV director (the chic thirtysomething) with only one previous feature to his credit (About Last Night), cast Matthew Broderick, who shares with Fonda a deceptively slight build and an ability to stand still and act with his eyes. Which is not to suggest that Glory is a homage to Ford; far from it, its purpose is to redeem a key moment of black history.

Glory: The ramparts of Fort Wagner.



It does, however, share one telling attribute of Ford at his best: it is not ashamed of its sentiments or its Americanism, its pride in Lincoln rather than Reagan. And here lies its significance as a straw in the wind for popular studio entertainment in the 90s: it vaults clean over the shame of Vietnam, to reaffirm the almost prehistoric notion of the value of gallantry in a just cause. And the gallantry is given an edge by a hint that Shaw lost his nerve at Antietam.

Aside from its motives, the film's chief virtue is its spectacular choreography. The final battle, in which Shaw and most of his regiment perish without taking the fort, is a striking combination of dynamism and clarity. The preliminaries are hackneyed, and the director makes a sustained effort to soften the hardest heart, but they work, not least because Zwick and his cast convince us that they genuinely believe in them.

The battle's intensity sucks in the spectator and quickens the blood. The pace gathers as the focus twists in on Shaw and his rush up a dune to the enemy's forward position. Then after more desperate hand-to-hand fighting (it doesn't really matter at this stage who is carrying the colours), the action is halted with a symbolic frozen tableau. It has been some time since one saw a full-dress military engagement recreated with so few showy effects and edited with such assurance.

The black players, notably Morgan Freeman, a one-time gravedigger who becomes the regiment's Sergeant-Major,

and Denzel Washington, a runaway slave who finally curbs his self-destructive hatred and embraces his destiny, perform with a notable reined-in dignity. These are repressed, disenfranchised men on the verge of a kind of equality with their white officers: and there is nothing in them of that old demeaning stereotype, the dignified slave. In this particular battle, they are all, black and white, in it together. (To see how far the world has changed, one might compare the performances of these black actors with that of Woody Strode, the cavalry sergeant in Ford's Sergeant Rutledge of thirty years ago.)

A soldier in front of Shaw at Antietam has his head blown off; and there is, too, a histrionic amputation scene in the gory surgical tent. On the whole, however, Zwick avoids attention-seeking effects: his subject is not the individual in battle, and what bullets and shrapnel do to him, but the fused, spiritually indestructible regiment; the great simplicities, before the knotted realities of racial prejudice had to be addressed in detail.

sseu III detail.

JOHN PYM



MAYBE BABY

Everything, a character in *Everybody Wins* (Virgin) observes, 'is possible and impossible at the same time'. Which, as a starting-point for a thriller, is fair enough. The trouble is that the remark occurs over halfway through the movie, at a point when we should be well towards sorting out which is which. And the final credits don't find us a lot further forward.

The premise is classic. A private investigator, Tom O'Toole (Nick Nolte), grizzled and battered but still warily game, is summoned to a small New England town by an enigmatic lady. There has been, she tells him, a horrendous perversion of justice. A respected local doctor has been savagely done to death, and the rap has been pinned on his young nephew. But she knows who really did it, and so do the cops, and so does the whole corrupt township.

Tom's problem, of course, and ours, is whether to believe her—a problem compounded by the fact that Angela Crispini (Debra Winger) is clearly unbalanced and quite possibly deranged. She's also, some say, the town hooker, and on her own (unreliable) admission was sleeping not only with the doctor, but with almost everybody involved in the case—including the ambitious DA who nailed the conviction, and with whom Tom has clashed once before. Furthermore, she won't say who the killer is, or why the local citizens would connive at a cover-up.

Tve never known anybody so hard to get a fix on,' Tom grumbles. Not

without reason; Winger gives a virtuoso performance, switching personas in the finest display of galloping schizophrenia since Rod Steiger's death-scene in *No Way to Treat a Lady*: from prissy schoolmarm to foul-mouthed whore to quivering paranoid to clinging vine, all with split-second fluency. The effect is intriguing, but ultimately inconclusive.

The same, in the final analysis, could be said of the film—Karel Reisz's direction no less than Arthur Miller's screenplay. Reisz makes atmospheric use of his post-industrial locations, in particular a rusting, disused mill converted into a cross between a metal foundry and a kitsch-fundamentalist chapel, around which his camera prowls with looselimbed menace. At other times he lingers over the sagging, mistrustful faces in a sleazy bar where Tom leafs through the trial transcript. But all this remains backdrop, ambience for its own sake, put to no dramatic purpose.

The plot likewise never gets a firm grip on its own conventions. At one stage, with burnt bones in a graveyard and a shrine to a dead Civil War hero, we seem to be heading into Stephen King territory. Then the mood swerves into cinema of paranoia, with the shrine's chief acolyte—a mad-eyed biker who may be the real killer-wielding an acetylene torch, leather-clad heavies gathered in menacing poses, and the local cops staring balefully from a cruising police car. Some cathartic explosion of violence seems to be heralded, but never materialises. Subverting expectations is fine; but as Hitchcock knew, if you're going to deny the audience the expected, you've got to give them the unexpected instead. Everybody Wins takes away, but it doesn't give.

So promising plot strands are intro-

duced, only to peter out. The old judge to whom Tom appeals over the case (Jack Warden, foxily benign) is constantly found engaged in sporting activities—clay-pigeon shooting, pool playing, pedalling an exercise bike—but what this tells us about him, or the state of the local judiciary, is none too clear. And at one point a saturnine young Catholic priest shows up to arrange an assignation in the church; but all that transpires is the lame revelation that Tom is Angela's 'only link with reality'.

In the end, the film falls in on itself. The mad biker conveniently flattens himself against an oncoming truck. The motivation is wrapped up with some throwaway stuff about drug peddling. The nephew goes free but the corruption, if it existed, remains unexposed, with Angela seemingly installed as the judge's mistress. Tom, refusing a drink from the DA, strolls off grinning cheerfully (at what?), and the camera tilts up to gaze at the handsome colonial facade of the judge's mansion.

Everybody Wins is Arthur Miller's first original screenplay since The Misfits, nearly thirty years ago. The Huston film, with its fated stars (Gable, Monroe, Clift) and its central image of wild mustangs rounded up for dog-food, carried strong allegorical overtones, in the post-McCarthy era, of the trashing of the American dream. The new film could perhaps be taken as Miller's comment on the Reagan years, in which the evasions and hypocrisies, the rumours of disclosures and impeachments, finally fizzled away to nothing, with the chief culprit ambling off into the sunset with the same old amiable grin.

But if that was the idea, the resonance has leaked out somewhere along

the line, leaving us with little more than a series of open-ended questions. Was the nephew innocent? Maybe. Was the mad biker guilty? Maybe again. Is Angela the town hooker, was she hitting the hay with just about everyone concerned, and was the whole farrago the product of her free-wheeling fantasy? More maybes. And finally, do we care? Maybe not. After all, as any gambler knows, the trouble with everybody winning is that you end up with a pretty unsatisfactory pay-out.

PHILIP KEMP



THREE WIVES

ENEMIES, A LOVE STORY

'Although I did not have the privilege of going through the Hitler holocaust,' Isaac Bashevis Singer ironically begins his Author's Note, 'I have lived for years in New York with refugees from this ordeal. I therefore hasten to say that this novel is by no means the story of the typical refugee, his life, and struggle. Like most of my fictional works, this book presents an exceptional case with unique heroes and a unique combination of events. The characters are not only Nazi victims but victims of their own personalities and fates. If they fit into the general picture, it is because the exception is rooted in the rule. As a matter of fact, in literature the exception is the rule.'

Forewarned is forearmed: Singer's tragi-comic 1972 novel is a holocaust story, but a far from typical one. Set in New York in 1949-50, it focuses on a Jewish survivor named Herman Broder who finds himself living what amounts to three separate, if sometimes distractingly overlapping lives as a direct consequence of the holocaust's traumatic upheavals. In Coney Island, he is married to Yadwiga, his former maid in Poland, a non-Jew who kept him alive during the war by hiding him in a hayloft, and who now happily waits on him hand and foot. Herman tells her he is a travelling book salesman who has to spend much of his time in remote American cities. But in fact he ghosts speeches for a wealthy Manhattan rabbi, and is carrying on a torrid affair with Masha, another holocaust survivor, married but separated, who lives with her mother in the Bronx.

It's a fairly manageable arrangement—at least until Herman discovers that his first wife, Tamara, whom he had heard was killed along with their two children by the Nazis, is alive and well in Manhattan. Herman makes no attempt to conceal his second marriage from Tamara, and before long she learns about Masha too, but wisened and battle-weary from her life in the camps, Tamara makes no marital claims on her husband, serving instead as his friend, adviser and occasional



lover. Masha, however, who knows about Herman's marriage to Yadwiga, is beset with jealousy, and wants to marry him as well, largely for the sake of her mother. Eventually, Herman finds himself with three separate wives in three separate New York boroughs.

The comic side of this situation makes it prime material for a film-maker like Paul Mazursky, but the no less tragic undertones would seem to make it an unlikely subject for a writer-director whose usual stomping ground is the contemporary, upwardly mobile middleclass. From Bob & Carol & Ted & Alice to Down and Out in Beverly Hills, Mazursky has been the staunch defender and celebrator of American bourgeois values, for all his fascination with various kinds of 'deviance'. Despite periodic efforts to dramatise the dissatisfactions of his usually well-heeled characters that suggest a desire to break out of boulevard comedy, Mazursky generally follows Hollywood formula by coming down squarely on the side of conventional values after extended weekend flirtations with transgression.

All of which leaves one quite unprepared for the absence of glibness in Mazursky's first real adaptation, *Enemies*, a Love Story (Fox)—an exception in his career that does not



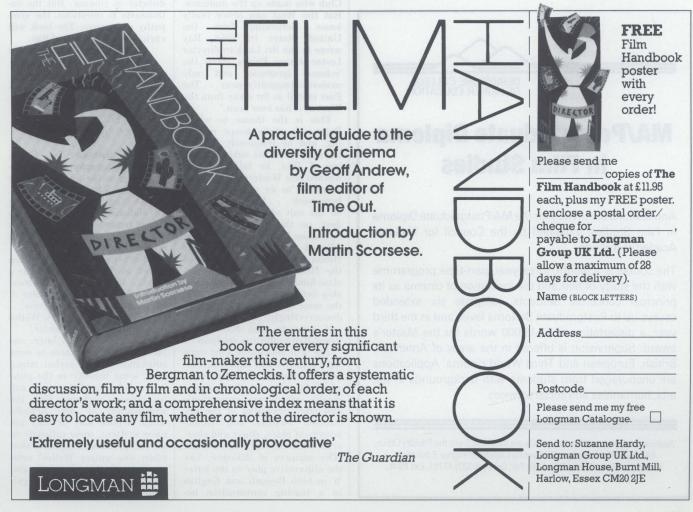
Enemies: Anjelica Huston

quite become the rule (by altering one's judgment of his earlier films), but which does an exceptional job of trying. While he and co-writer Roger L. Simon have needlessly broadened some of the farcical and/or caricatural elements of Singer's novel—the hamminess of Alan King's first scene as the rabbi; the contrived comic complications to Herman and Masha's holiday in the Catskills—they have in general stuck to the tone of the original. And thanks to a

superb cast—Ron Silver (Herman), Anjelica Huston (Tamara), Margaret Sophie Stein (Yadwiga), Lena Olin (Masha)—much of the complexity and nearly all the poignancy of Singer's conception is well served.

What is mainly missing is Singer's richer sense of the characters-Tamara's former activities as a Communist and Zionist, Herman's paranoid revenge fantasies, and the tangled underpinnings of Masha's suicidal impulses—although the story's slightly amended conclusion could arguably be defended as an improvement. What remains is Singer's beguilingly deceptive structure, which begins by positing Herman as the hero of the tale-cynically defeated in his emotional indecisiveness, though hardly unsympatheticand then gradually allows his three wives to overtake him, mitigating and eventually subverting most of the story's male-chauvinist fantasy capers as the trio steadily grow in strength and prominence. Although practically all the story is stold from Herman's viewpoint, he literally vanishes from the plot by the final scene, and it is a crucial part of both Singer and Mazursky's uncommon achievement that he isn't missed at all, either by the characters or the audience.

JONATHAN ROSENBAUM



BOOK REVIEWS

ILLUMINATING RAY

SATYAJIT RAY The Inner Eye

by Andrew Robinson André Deutsch/£17.95

Revealing, over the years, to observe the sea change in Western critical attitudes to the films of Satyajit Ray. In the cold days of the mid-1950s, with empires crumbling and an old Europe depressed as the promise of neorealism was tempered by secondrate realities, *Pather Panchali* came as a refreshing surprise.

Here was an Indian filmmaker-and who then knew Indian cinema?-who seemed to reflect from afar the anxious humanist values of a Western world still stranded between old codes and the bomb-faded prospect of a brave new age. The difference was appealing. And the exoticism of a still alien India, nervously touched on over here, was subsumed within the comforting recognition that an Indian film-maker should actually possess so European a sensibility. It was not long before Ray was being called Chekhovian.

Ray himself was certainly grateful for the Western critical support for the Apu trilogy. In-

terestingly, though, he is equally certain that Western critics and audiences have never properly appreciated his films, distant as they are from the nuances of Bengali history, culture and religion, of which even non-Bengali Indians are largely unaware. Interestingly also, as times have changed and India is now a ready destination for package tourists and Channel 4 can devote a whole evening to a version of the Mahabharata, critical relations appear to have cooled. Weaned on the Apu trilogy, Devi and Charulata, we Westerners now impatiently await a golden swansong.

The time is auspicious, then, for a considered critical biography of Ray. And Andrew Robinson's exhaustive appreciation is a welcome guide to a fuller understanding of this singular film-maker. Robinson has the advantage over earlier writers on Ray that his interest was not seriously awakened until he saw The Chess Players in 1977. Unspoilt by nostalgia for the deceptively simple virtues of Ray's early films, Robinson enthusiastically set off down the none too easy road of getting to know the man and his work. His extraordinary diligence-which extended to learning the Bengali

language—illuminates his book.

The early chapters provide a comprehensive account of Ray's family history, stretching back over several generations whose astonishing range of cultural accomplishments are invoked as a genealogical provenance for Ray's own diversity of interests. The fusion of East and West, so often noted in Ray's work, was there in his family backgroundhis grandfather an expert in halftone illustrations, his father a Bengali Lear or Carroll, the family printing press installed in the childhood house. Ray himself grew up in an environment of music, stories, art, and was soon taking notes in the Calcutta cinemas. The astrologer who predicted of the young Satyajit that he would become famous 'through the use of light' was on

to an easy thing.
The author's Dickensian nose for detail, both pertinent and incidental, eventually extends to the more familiar territory of the films themselves. And it is here that the rationale for Robinson's guide to a century of Bengali cultural history comes into focus. He has a fascinating chapter on the difficulty of making Pather Panchali, whose premiere in a Calcutta ballroom was evidently only appreciated by the British members of the Advertising Club who made up the audience. But the West can never really know. Returning from the United States in 1958, Ray wrote to the Sri Lankan director Lester James Peries about the 'colossal ignorance and only moderate inquisitiveness . . . The East is still as far away from the West as it has ever been.'

This is the theme to which Robinson's study keeps returning, and he frequently invokes the support of his subject. Writing of Devi, he tells us, Ray warned the Western critic to be prepared 'to do a great deal of homework . . . He must read up on the cult of the Mother Goddess; on the 19th century Renaissance in Bengal and how it affected the values of orthodox Hindu society; on the position of the Hindu bride in an upperclass family, and on the relationship between father and son in the same family.' Disarmingly, if disconcertingly, Robinson him-self suggests that Ray's films 'resist thoroughgoing analysis'.

The book sets out to shed some light on our dark. Robinson's detailed accounts of Ray's films, which he takes mostly chronologically, are always sympathetic and often revealing of the unstressed nuances and oblique accents of place, object and character which so mark Ray's work. (The nuances of dialogue, like the alliterative play on the letter by' in both Bengali and English in a teasing conversation be-

tween Charu and Amal in Charulata, we often miss.)

He is particularly good on the admittedly more elusively 'Indian' films like Devi and The Music Room, and on the key place of music in the films, which since Three Daughters in 1961 the director himself has composed, often combining Indian and Western musical influences and instruments in a way that apparently disconcerts his more conservative domestic critics. And while he too carefully distances himself from a general view of stylistic discord in films like Nayak and The Adversary, Robinson does not shirk the occasional stricture.

There are chapters on Ray's unrealised projects, including the film everyone would like to have seen, his version of A Passage to India (he is caustic about the version we have); on his little-known documentaries; and on the films he made from his own detective stories. But Robinson's guiding principle is to show us what we miss in Ray's films. His book is a labour of love, in every sense. He is too close to his subject to avoid an occasional special pleading, never more so than in his concluding view that Ray has continued to experiment with subject matter and style 'surely more than any other director in cinema'. But the enthusiasm is infectious, the sympathy persuasive. The book will enrich our re-viewing of Ray.

DAVID WILSON



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RAGTIME ORSON

CITIZEN WELLES

by Frank Brady Hodder & Stoughton/£18.95

Perhaps nothing in Frank Brady's biography is as discouraging as the way he chooses to begin it: 'I had to quickly pull, almost drag, myself out of quite an elaborate dream—I can no longer remember its content—as the ringing abruptly awakened me in my hotel room in Hollywood several years ago at seven o'clock in the morning. It was a Sunday in July. "This is Orson Welles," said the polite voice at the other end of the telephone . . . In an instant I was alert. Welles was responding to my letter.'

Six hundred pages later, one has to admit that there is some substance in this verbal stickiness, some honesty in the pulsing melodrama of the phone call (it pulses, perhaps, like the novelisation of *Mr Arkadin* which Welles may or may not have written), some rationale in the self-preening suggestion that when one enters Welles' orbit every detail (that elusive dream) becomes charged with significance.

BOOK REVIEWS

The detail it piles up is certainly the book's outstanding virtue, simply that it gives us more items of Wellesiana than ever before, more anecdotes and pieces of that vast creative enterprise. Not, however, anecdotes mixed with too much gossip, because Brady is actually lighter on-in fact, seems to steer fastidiously clear of-the stories behind Welles' marriages and amours, his curious relationship with his 'guardian' Dr Bernstein or the periodic intrusions of his elder, insane brother Richard, than previous biographers Barbara Leaming and Charles Higham. It's the working life that is diligently ransacked here, and the book does succeed in bringing out why that life is so fascinating, why it seems such an essential drama of the creative history of the twentieth century.

A peculiar but necessary logic connects the widespread assumption that Welles' prodigious talents were squandered with the sense that emerges here of how all-encompassing they were. That he took everything in as he moved restlessly across media and then had to give it back, in dazzling new forms, in bumptious extravaganzas, in fragments and in endless, nevercompleted excursions and experimentations. It's a life that might well inspire a biographer's belief that his own life is about to be similarly 'taken up'.

And Welles, notoriously un-

comfortable about giving his history straight to his chroniclers, did suggest to Barbara Leaming that their own relationship should become part of her biography. The problem with his films was that they were irrepressibly expansive in the same way-the problem being that as he went deeper than anyone into this wellspring of cinema, its fragmentary creative processes and proliferation of detail, producing 'ultimate', riddling films like Citizen Kane or F for Fake, he also made a successful film career for himself impossible.

Brady's account suggests such a logic but he never examines it, so that the book, almost despite itself, comes to reflect that common belief about Welles' career, that all was brilliant achievement up to Citizen Kane and then sad decline, bad luck and self-destruction after it. Behind this, though, something more interesting can be glimpsed, that the Welles who was creatively everywhere and nowhere, the dynamo who by his early twenties had absorbed the worlds of theatre and radio, then found in film the perfect form of selfexpression, but one that would convert the centripetal energies of those early years into the centrifugal forces of the later. If one of the cinema's greatest boons was in finding Welles, his worst piece of luck might have been in finding the cinema at all.

Although he doesn't repeat Higham's crude decline and fall thesis, Brady does echo it in his structure and technique. Three hundred pages up to Citizen Kane; three hundred pages for the forty-five years that followed. Through that first 'half', the book does a commendable job of sorting out the chronology of Welles' multi-media onslaught, of describing the range of his radio and stage productions (adumbrating without belabouring their 'cinematic techniques'). In the second half, the book plods, seemingly lost in the dispersal of Welles' talents, rigidly giving a production history and quotes from contemporary reviews of any film Welles was involved in, which tends to meld, say, his Othello with the roles (Prince of Foxes, The Black Rose) he took to finance it.

What makes the first half so absorbing is that the subject is clearly a match for the 'colourful' style announced in those first sentences-seems, in fact, to call for it, his life evolving like some meta-fiction, à la Doctorow's Ragtime, to which all kinds of curious historical detail rushes to attach itself. During his teenage jaunt to Ireland, he comes across Robert Flaherty making Man of Aran; going to Chicago's Biograph cinema with Hilton Edwards and Micheál MacLiammoir, he hears John Dillinger being shot down outside.

The description of the making of Citizen Kane may be the high point of the book (as it assumes it to be of Welles' life and career). Not because Brady is particularly good at film analysis—when he examines Welles' style or 'theory' of cinema, his prose bumps awkwardly into references to Kuleshov or André Bazin or Marshall McLuhan—but again because of the detail he has unearthed.

There's a vivid account of how the first scene was shot, the 'News on the March' sequence, which Welles passed off as a 'test' to avoid studio scrutiny and shot in an actual RKO projection booth, casting as his unseen reporters either actors with other parts in the film (Joseph Cotten, Erskine Sanford) or such casual conscripts as a then unknown Alan Ladd. Brady has been criticised for calling his book Citizen Welles without pursuing the connections between Charles Foster Kane and George Orson Welles. Rather better, what his book exemplifies is the connection between Welles and the film itself, all those dazzling fragments orbiting in a galaxy of their own that is also a void.

RICHARD COMBS

CINEMA AS POETRY

TARKOVSKY

by Maya Turovskaya Faber and Faber/£12.99

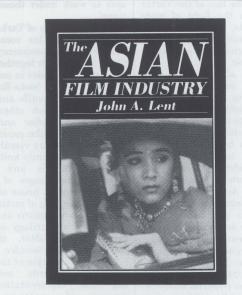
'The work of the young director, who always knew what to shoot, and who had a thorough, allround grasp of the technical aspects' is the comment entered in the official statistical breakdown of Ivan's Childhood, following the film's completion. Only just out of film school, Tarkovsky 'inherited' the project after the original director failed to produce usable material. With no room for mistakes and under pressure to shoot quickly, Tarkovsky none the less insisted on starting afresh and rewriting the scenario.

Out went all the scenes depicting the heroism of the young scouts and the tense masculine atmosphere of their 'zonal' wartime experiences. In came a totally new and clearly 'Tarkovskian' element: a sense of idyll, of delight in a carefree relationship with surrounding nature, and the haunting memory of a mother. Those extraordinary sunlit scenes so out of place in a Soviet war film, those feminine features of the young

Ivan, and above all that image of the mother, are what finally become the measure of all that has been mutilated and destroyed by the war.

Unsurprisingly, Vladimir Bogomolov, who wrote the novel on which the film was based, and himself a former scout, was appalled at these additions. More surprising (though in hindsight entirely predictable) was the fact that it was the unknown director who won the battle and not the established writer. Already in his first feature Tarkovsky announced the surety of vision, and the absolute fidelity to that vision, which was to produce such uncompromising stands against anything that endangered its realisation.

Ivan's Childhood went on to win the Golden Lion at Venice in 1962, and among those astonished by its arrival in their midst was Maya Turovskaya, whose book is unashamedly written from within the reverberations of that still-continuing original astonishment. In fact, the thoughts and emotions which Ivan's Childhood provoked within her are the blueprint from which this book takes form, to the extent of having two chapters to itself, while the other films make do with one. This is



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CHRISTOPHER HELM \$\pi\$

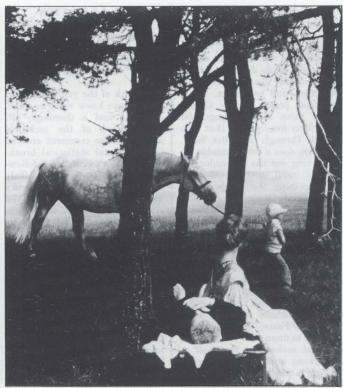
because *Ivan's Childhood* is for her both the most accessible and the most paradigmatic of Tarkovsky's films. In it is what she will term the *dynamic stereotype* that permeates his work: the brutal irruption of catastrophe in an apparently safe world.

It is a persuasive argument, which makes use of both biographical and historical fact. Tarkovsky's own childhood was blighted by the war, and he was part of a new generation of young self-confident filmmakers, encouraged by the 'thaw' that Khrushchev had apparently ushered in, and anxious to break with the past and its conventions of heroic socialist realism so dear to 'the Soviet Union's only important film critic', as Stalin was referred to. However Khrushchev did not last long, and by the time Tarkovsky had completed Andrei Roublev, he was faced with the more static bulk of Brezhnev, who apparently left halfway through a private screening, intent that it should never be shown in public again.

Why were the authorities so hostile to the film? Tarkovsky remained baffled to the end of his life, and Turovskaya sheds no light on the question. There were objections to the violence and, of course, the absence of any scenes showing Russian heroism in the face of the Tartar invasion. In the light of more recent events, however, I think we can surmise that it is above all the religious content which caused unease.

Moreover, although the film, as always in Tarkovsky, is attempting to speak of 'Russia' and 'the Russian soul', concepts which were to loom large in Mirror and Nostalgia, it depicts a world which bears an uncanny resemblance to the Georgia of Sergei Paradzhanov's Shadows of Our Forgotten Ancestors, completed while Andrei Roublev was still in production. I cannot think this is pure coincidence, all the more so since Paradzhanov is mentioned alongside Buñuel, Bergman and Bresson as figures in Tarkovsky's pantheon in Sculpting in Time. Was it a fear of the powerful echoes of nationalist independence that made Brezhnev and others suspicious of Tarkovsky's film?

Whatever the reasons, Tarkovsky at least did not find himself in jail as a result and did not have any of his subsequent film projects blocked. In fact his battles with the authorities were destined always to be at the distribution rather than production end of film-making. He enjoyed, as Turovskaya and others have pointed out, an unheard-of freedom in the actual choice and making of his films. At no stage in his career was he obliged to



'Motifs, dreams, images . . .' A scene apparently shot for The Sacrifice, not included in the completed film.

work in state-sanctioned genres, or leaned on ideologically, or expected to make commercially viable work. What Orson Welles would have given to have been able to work under those conditions!

The consistency of Tarkovsky's commitment to his vocation is reflected in the consistency of his films, all of which together seem to resemble episodes in one great film, a kind of 'meta-Roublev', where themes, motifs and characters reflect each other, echo one another, suffer and commune together, like passages in some extraordinary visual fugue. Turovskaya patiently knits some of these themes and motifs together-the images of flight, that omnipresent house of childhood, the merging of mother and wife in Mirror, Solaris and Nostalgia, and the trilogy of 'holy fools', from Stalker, through Nostalgia to The Sacrifice.

This new direction of the 'late' Tarkovsky-towards minimalism and representations of dramas of muteness and impotence—was, of course, already prefigured in Roublev's vow of silence (Alexander in The Sacrifice also makes a vow of silence) and in the extraordinary prologue to Mirror, where the stuttering boy is suddenly enabled to speak coherently. This last scene was shot with a 'documentary' hidden camera, and when the boy began to speak the crew wept at the apparent miracle. And yet, despite this continuity, there is undoubtedly some crisis that occurs between Mirror and Stalker which brings about an increasing austerity in Tarkovsky's work. This change in rhythm and colour is noted by Turovskaya, but its causes remain unexplained. Perhaps only a full biography will enlighten us further.

Turovskaya's chapter on Tarkovsky's motifs is less detailed than it might be, and I was surprised not to find trees mentioned. Can one imagine a Tarkovsky film without a tree? After all, his first film, Ivan's Childhood, and his last, The Sacrifice, both begin and end with trees. Nor is this an academic quibble, for Tarkovsky was always at pains to point out that the effort his cinema requires, both for viewer and director, exists in these poetic, associative links, rather than in banalities of meaning and turns of plot. And was it not Bresson who reflected that between a tree and an actor there is no comparison?

I was somewhat disappointed with Ian Christie's introduction; although providing some valuable historical background, it does not quite seem to be prepared to accept Tarkovsky on precisely those grounds which the director claimed were his strongest and most universal. For instance, his life-long antipathy towards commercial film surely cannot be seen as something that 'only a Soviet director, freed of all commercial responsibility by the state' would experience. Are we to take it that Bresson and Wenders are therefore honorary Soviet directors? And the claim that Tarkovsky's 'Platonism' is, again, symptomatically Soviet in origin and tradition seems to me quite extraordinary.

As for Christie's description of Tarkovsky's outlook as 'essentially symbolist', despite every-thing Tarkovsky has said, in Sculpting in Time and elsewhere, against symbolism, it is a comment that resembles little more than a slap in the face. Symbolism and metaphor were always for Tarkovsky part of either the intellectual use of images of an Eisenstein or the ideological message-bearing cinema of the state. Motifs, dreams, images, yes. But would one ever describe Hari's shawl in Solaris as a 'symbol'? Tarkovsky at least begs us not to.

One phrase repeated in both Christie's introduction and the translation of Turovskaya's book, and which I think sums up the unwillingness of both commentators to meet Tarkovsky in precisely that experience which he most wanted to communicate, is 'spiritual baggage'. Now I think it is predictable that academics and critics are least likely to respond to the religious dimension of Tarkovsky's work, rather like the scientist in Stalker, or worse, Solaris. And yet this crucial aspect cannot simply be set aside as so much spiritual baggage, a kind of unfortunate pre-Renaissance hangover, which we sophisticated atheists in the West hardly need.

To dismiss the importance of the intensely religious expressions of belief, faith and hope in Tarkovsky's films is to be deaf to his cinema, a cinema whose urgency and relevance for us in the 1990s has no equal. So much so that I am inclined to believe what we really need, apart from a biography, is a work on Tarkovsky written not by a critic, but by a theologian. Perhaps a new André Bazin? Still, as Turovskaya says, she has done the best she can; let others try to do better.

DAVID RUSSELL

NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

DAVID DOCHERTY is Research Director at the Broadcasting Standards Council . . . QUENTIN FALK is a freelance film journalist and writer . . . PHILIP FRENCH is film critic of the Observer . . . SARAH GRISTWOOD is a freelance journalist and contributes to the Guardian . . . JOHN HARKNESS is film critic of Toronto's Now magazine . . . JONATHAN KEATES is a critic and novelist . . . BRIAN NEVE teaches at the University of Bath . . . JEFFREY SIPE is the Japan correspondent for Screen International and also a contributor to Taipan, an Asian men's magazine out of Manila.

LETTERS



sir,—I am writing this letter not so much for people in Britain—most of them already know what repute to attach to our film censorship board—but in case your readers abroad imagine that James Ferman's remarks, as reported by Derek Malcolm, signify contentment, never mind smugness, with the present set up.

Far from it. Eleven years ago, the Report of the Committee on Obscenity and Film Censorship (the 'Williams Committee') characterised the British Board of Film Censors (as the present 'Classification' Board then more candidly called itself) as: 'a tiny self-perpetuating private body, answerable to no one for the way it conducts its affairs.' This is essentially how it still is: the major change is that it is no longer 'tiny', but now has a staff of 71 (instead of the nine of 15 years ago when the film trade appointed Mr Ferman as 'secretary').

It still uses the pernicious tactic of 'prior restraint' to carry out its work of certificating films as fit for public showing before the public can judge for itself. It derives this power from the local town councils, who delegate it to the film censors and enforce it by denying an exhibition licence to any public cinema not agreeing to the censors' decision. It is no part of local government to make moral judgments of this kind-or to delegate authority for doing so to a privately appointed body.

Your article estimates that to have a film officially classified (or not) costs a distributor, on average, £600. To have to pay for being censored simply rubs insult into intolerance. The need to get a classification should be abolished and any cinema should be free to exhibit a noncertificated film—and accept the penalties already laid down by the law, if it offends against the

The other deep cause for concern is the new dimension of Mr Ferman's work-certificating (and sometimes requiring cuts in) films on video. This power he and his board exercise by statutory legislation-the Video Recordings Act of 1984. The penalties for this are applied under the criminal law. It is a morally dubious position that the BBFC is in: appointed by the film trade (even if independent of it) for the purpose of certificating films, yet empowered by the government for the purpose of censoring videos. This is totally unacceptable and can only have arisen from the English talent for moral muddle and cultural indifference.

'A society without manners is a society without consideration,'

Mr Ferman is quoted as saying. A society permitted to see only what the censor thinks fit for it is a society under constraint. That he should call the board's work of discrimination and suppression by the term of 'a public philosophy' is laughable when one considers that the reasons behind the decisions made are frequently based on nothing more 'philosophical' than guesswork, equivocation and personal predilection. Mr Ferman recalls the clairvoyant who reads the fortunes in the tea leaves, except that in his case the tea has not yet even been poured out.

I hope the new body of laws on the free exchange of ideas being shaped in the European Community will even now allow the British censors to be challenged at home or abroad. It is time their private and personal modus operandi was abolished and the rule of law fully replaced the law of the censor.

Yours faithfully, ALEXANDER WALKER London w9 1RW

Film Handbook

SIR,-Given that you chose to review my Film Handbook along with The Time Out Film Guide, I fully realise that you were limited in your choice of writers and did not want to commission someone whose writing was represented in the latter book. Might I suggest, however, that your readers would have been better served had Adam Barker actually bothered to read and review the books properly and not written about them as if they were the kind of books they were never intended to be. As for my own book, I certainly do not wish to object to his taking issue with my various pronouncements on various directors, but as the introduction states, I did hope that the book would 'provoke the reader into a thoughtful response'. Unhappily, in the case of your reviewer, my hopes seem to have been in vain.

Not only does Mr Barker seem a mite confused-having initially described both books as 'stimulating', he then goes on to conclude that 'the new audience for cinema deserves something better' (What, may I ask? We are never told)-but in the case of the Time Out book, he appears to have misunderstood the anthology's purpose and function. The main problem, he says, is the cumulative effect of twenty years of overheated prose; but as Geoff Brown rightly points out in his notice for the collected reviews of Dilys Powell, only a mad reviewer would plough through the book like a novel. Such volumes are meant for dipping into as the occasion arises.

Perhaps worse, in assessing my own book, Mr Barker resorts

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to what may be seen (favourably) as inaccuracy, or (less favourably) as dishonesty. He says Spike Lee and Pedro Almodovar are not included. True, they did not warrant full entries at the time of writing (i.e. before Do the Right Thing and Law of Desire had been seen in this country), but they are mentioned in the text as subjects for further investigation, as are two other 'omissions' he notes, Wes Craven and Raul Ruiz.

More seriously, however, Mr Barker complains that 'neither of these works contributes much in the way of new knowledge.' Well, this may be true for a film critic of Mr Barker's evidently enormous experience and knowledge, but I should like him to tell me where 'the ordinary enthusiastic movie-goer' the book is aimed at could find, gathered in one volume, essays on Robert Benton, Bertrand Blier, John Brahm, James L. Brooks, Chen Michael Cimino, the Kaige, Coen Brothers, Larry Cohen, Alex Cox, Paul Cox, David Cronenberg, Joe Dante, Terence Davies, Jonathan Demme, Bill Douglas, Bill Forsyth, Terry Gilliam, Peter Greenaway, Derek Jarman, Jim Jarmusch, Neil Jordan, Philip Kaufman, Elem Klimov, John Landis, Barry Levinson, David Lynch, Michael Mann, Alan Parker, Rob Reiner, Alan Rudolph, John Sayles, Ridley Scott, Oliver Stone, the Taviani Brothers and Robert Zemeckis. I hope I have made my point.

Yours faithfully,
GEOFF ANDREW
Films Editor, Time Out
London wc2E 7HD

SIR,—A few words of praise for *The Film Handbook* by Geoff Andrew. In my view, a far better book than the SIGHT AND SOUND review suggests.

Your reviewer seems to lose sight of the general picture. Longman has published seven such handbooks, of which I also know the jazz and ballet ones. A very good concept, and Andrew fills his brief admirably. I can't think of a competitive volume. Compared to the British books used at the University here, the level of the Handbook would probably be considered too advanced!

Yours faithfully, H. TRANSGAARD Denmark

Build Hollywood

sir,—I was dismayed to see so much space devoted to Build Hollywood's story of how they grabbed the wrong end of the stick and proceeded to beat their drum loudly with it (SIGHT AND SOUND, Winter 1989/90).

I am currently on a filmmaking training course, and when I finish I too will be faced with the choice of a traditional route through the established industry or making a break for it in the independent sector. I believe I will only succeed in either if I have any real talent.

I attended Build Hollywood's 'Myths in Film-making' weekend, where I saw many interesting short films which, despite the obvious shortcomings of hardly-any-budget film-making, showed the sparkle of genuine talent. However, even with prior knowledge of the saga leading up to the making of Rules of Comedy, this film could not be put in that category, and I cannot understand why Build Hollywood persist in claiming more attention than they deserve.

The only context in which any audience views a film, whether representatives of funding bodies or ordinary punters, is on the understanding that they pay for a ticket (or licence fee) in order to be entertained, interested, moved, amused, intellectually stimulated, etc, and to these ends length, style and form are immaterial as long as the original idea is sound. Film-making is also a business, which Build Hollywood found to their cost, and I would be interested to know how many organisations are willing to back their next project.

Yours faithfully, RICHARD MILWARD London SW17 8SN

Film supply

SIR,—Keith Reader's letter (Winter 1989/90) and Ian Christie's reply are relevant to a recent experience of this Society.

We are used to finding that we often cannot book new films because they are in great demand, but not having expected any difficulties with an older film, listed as 'available' in the BFI catalogue, we were dismayed to find that the distributor's rights had expired—he still has the film but cannot let us show it. To find that our alternative choice had also lapsed suggests that there is a growing problem.

If the answer is substantially higher rental prices, then I fear that the very encouraging growth in film societies may come to an end.

On a happier note, Alan Pavelin asks when was the last screening of *Ugetsu Monogatari*. I am pleased to report that we showed it in November 1989.

Yours faithfully, N. TAYLOR Phoenix Film Society Southampton SO2 3NP

Les Enfants du Paradis

SIR,—'As It Was in the Beginning' by Alan Stanbrook (Winter 1989/90) has raised once more a question in my mind concerning Les Enfants du Paradis.

Is it true, as was rumoured many years ago, that a considerable section of this film has never been publicly shown, presumably because of the already inordinate length of the screening we are used to seeing? The section removed was said to have concerned the marriage of the Count de Montray and Garance and their sojurn in Scotland

Yours faithfully, JAMES SMITH Lewes BN7 2LU

The Third Cat

SIR,—Small feline footnote to Paul Driver's enjoyable article on *The Third Man* (Winter 1989/90). As the stills you showed make clear, the cat that comes prowling towards the doorway where Harry Lime is lurking differs quite a lot (in size, markings, etc) from the animal that, a shot or two later, we see nuzzling his toecaps.

But, equally, neither of these is the same cat that we've been shown a little earlier in Anna's apartment, refusing to play with Holly. ('Not very sociable, is he?' 'No, he only liked Harry.') In other words, what's happening in that shadowed doorway—felicitously enough—is an encounter between the Third Man and the Third Cat.

Yours faithfully, PHILIP KEMP London NW1 9PR

SIR,—Paul Driver in his felicitously timed cento on *The Third Man*—timely because it was shown again on television close to the publication of his appreciation—inevitably focuses on 'one of the greatest moments in cinema', namely the first sighting of Harry Lime. Yet despite the inspired selection of stills from the film, the magic moment was not reproduced. Any chance of making up for this omission in your next issue?

Yours faithfully, KEVIN HENRIQUES London W2 3QH

Judy and Johnny

sir,—I would like to know if there is anyone apart from myself who has offered the following explanation of the supposed 'Hi, Judy' comment.

Surely the greeting sounds like 'Hi, Johnny' and nothing like 'Hi, Judy'. Bearing in mind that Tom Drake's character is called John Truett and that he has been running to catch up with a bus full of his friends,



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LETTERS

would it not be within the realms of possibility that one of them would say 'Hi, Johnny' as he makes his way to the top deck?

I already have to wear glasses and would appreciate some confirmation that the need for a hearing aid is still some distance in the future.

Yours faithfully, MARK BRADDEL Sidcup, Kent DA15 7HG

sir,—J. J. Hunsecker is wrong again; but twice this time. Walter Matthau has recently advised us that Matthau is indeed his real name. His credit on *Earthquake* as Walter Matuschanskayasky (as it is *correctly* spelt) is undoubtedly a joke which only serves to highlight your anonymous columnist's lack of both wit and scholarship.

Yours faithfully,
HINKY DINKY TRUESMITH
J.C. BLAKE
Film Dope
Nottingham N92 4GE

Jerzy Bossack

sir,—In your '1989 Obituary' I sadly missed the name of Polish documentary film-maker Jerzy Bossack, who died in May last year. His film-making career suffered from the vagaries of Stalinism and anti-semitism, but he will be best remembered for his moving documentary on the Warsaw ghetto, Requiem for 500,000. Bossack was Dean of the Lodz Film School. Among his pupils were now famous directors like Wajda, Has and Polanski.

Yours faithfully, BERT HOGENKAMP 1075 PE Amsterdam Netherlands

SIGHT AND SOUND QUESTIONNAIRE

John Place was judged to have submitted the best questionnaire. The three people drawn from the hat are: Leigh Chapman, Miss S. E. Townend and Paul Clinton. All will receive a bottle of champagne.

ALAN STANBROOK for The Boys from Fengkuei, A Summer at Grandpa's.

ST MARTIN'S PRESS (NY) for 'Altman in Kansas City'

photographs.

JEFFREY SIPE for *Tjoet Nya Dhien*.

LESLIE THORNTON for Peggy and Fred in Hell.
TRIMURTI FILMS for The Walls.

TRIMURTI FILMS for *The Walls*. 20th Century fox for *Mr Johnson*.

UIP for Internal Affairs, Enemies, a Love Story, Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade, Back to the Future Part II.

VIRGIN for *Everybody Wins*. WARNER BROS for *Roger & Me*, *Batman*.

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Cold Light, Quatermass.
BFI PRODUCTION for Fellow
Traveller, Distant Voices, Still
Lives.

RUDOLPH CARTIER for photograph of himself.

COLUMBIA TRI-STAR for Glory. CORI FILMS for Dr M. EMBASSY PICTURES for The Emerald Forest. EUROPEAN SCRIPT FUND for

photograph of European Script Fund grant winners. GALA for A Short Film About

Love.

GRAPHO PICTURES for Kuarup.
GUILD for Mountains of the Moon.
ITN NEWS pictures made by BFI
Photographic Unit.

ICA PROJECTS for The Time to Live and The Time to Die, Dust in the Wind.

GERHARD KASSNER for photograph of European Script Award.

NFA STILLS COLLECTION for Salto Mortale, The Story of Vernon and Irene Castle, The Boy with Green Hair, The Adventures of Robin Hood (Ambush), A Woman Like Satan, A Clockwork Orange, Ishtar.

OASIS for Yaaba.

OASIS IOF Tadoa.

PARAMOUNT for Shadow Makers.

PRESS ASSOCIATION/IAN SHOWELL

for motorway disaster

photograph.

SARAH QUILL for photograph of Yuri Tsivian. RANK for *Crimes and*

RECORDED RELEASING for Drowning by Numbers.
ROYAL SHAKESPEARE COMPANY for A Clockwork Orange.

Misdemeanors.



BLACK RAIN

(Artificial Eye) Shot in stark black and white, Shohei Imamura's atomic-bomb movie has the courage to begin with its most powerful requence—the explosion itself. The harrowing scenes of devastation are as graphic as any in Shindo's Children of Hiroshima. But they do come first. Shindo, Kinoshita in Children of Nagasaki, Kazuo Kuroki in Tomorrow saved the impact till later. How can Imamura cap the supreme tragic event of the century? In fact, by being bolder still. This is the only Hiroshima film to leaven anguish with humour. The horror of latent radiation sickness is tempered by extraordinary scenes of bucolic comedy—a crazed soldier too energetically reliving his wartime experiences; practised spongers who have turned the A bomb into a licence to go fishing. The counterpoint enhances the pathos, underlining the cherishable silliness of life and Imamura's theme that, in the end, 'an unjust peace is better than a war of justice.

■ BORN ON THE FOURTH OF JULY (UIP)

The second part of Oliver Stone's Vietnam trilogy tells the true story of Ron Kovic, an all-American patriot who was crippled in combat, suffered near mental collapse on his return to the us and then slowly regained his self-respect as an opponent of the war. Awesome, in both length and intensity, and greatly helped by Tom Cruise's outstanding performance as Kovic, a bizarre contrast to his role in the psychopathically jingoistic *Top Gun*. A devastating indictment of America's part in the war, held together chiefly by Stone's rage; a succession of stand-alone electric images. (Willem Dafoe, Kyra Sedgwick, Ray Barry.)

DANCIN' THRU THE DARK

(Palace)

An early Willy Russell play, brushed up for the Palace-BBC TV feature treatment and given a heel-clicking vitality by its young Liverpudlian cast. Uncertain girl on desperate prenuptial hen party runs into old flame, a quiet pop singer on a one-night return home from London. Her man and his mates, London. Her man and his mates, meanwhile, are preening and boozing with hooligan intensity. Slight but fast-paced story, set chiefly in a glittering matt-black dance hall, which despite its calculated populism avoids pulling its accurate and sometimes cynical punches. (Claire Hackett, Con O'Neill; director, Mike Ockrent.)

DRIVING MISS DAISY

(Warner Bros)

An old-style theatrical two-hander, from the play by Alfred Uhry, deftly opened out by director Bruce Beresford, about an elderly Southerner (Jessica Tandy) who, after crashing her motorcar, is compelled with much grumbling to take on an elderly chauffeur (Morgan Freeman). As in *Tender Mercies*, sentimentality hovers; but, as in Beresford's earlier picture, likewise a huge popular success the two central performances, full of internalised feeling, of the necessity for dignity under stress, carry the day. A story about the confusion of mind caused by prejudice; the iniquities are taken as read. Beautifully shot by Peter James, and edited with an exact slow beat. (Dan Aykroyd, Patti LuPone, Esther Rolle.)

THE FABULOUS BAKER BOYS

(Rank)

Jeff and Beau Bridges play a duo of nightclub piano-players going downhill fast on the Seattle circuit. Desperate to save their careers, they audition girl singers and end up with the slobby but enticing Michelle Pfeiffer. Their fortunes are briefly revived, but the tensions provoked by her affair with Jeff finally break up the act. A simple but wholly captivating picture. The brothers work wonderfully together, especially in their tired stage routine, and Pfeiffer's performance (using her own singing voice) is a revelation—her piano-top rendition of 'Making Whoopee' is the slinkiest thing since Marilyn Monroe. (Director, Steve Kloves.)

☐ ALL DOGS GO TO HEAVEN

(Rank)

Here Comes Mr Jordan with cartoon dogs: reprobate mutt, voiced by Burt Reynolds, returns from the grave in 1930s New Orleans to square matters with the gangster hounds who took him for a ride. A large spoonful of molasses from the Don Bluth kitchen.

☐ BILL & TED'S EXCELLENT ADVENTURE

(Premier)

Keanu Reeves and Alex Winter, two proud-to-be-stupid teens, are whizzed through the past (they must pass a history test for the future safety of the world) to meet Socrates, Joan of Arc, Billy the Kid, Freud, Genghis Khan and Abraham Lincoln. Rapid patter covers rickety moments in this loopy, amiably endearing California comedy. (Director, Stephen Herek.)

(UIP)

William Wharton's affecting novel becomes a cloying family drama, with Jack Lemmon and Olympia Dukakis, heavily madeup octogenarians, and Ted Danson, full of readymade charm, as the son who comes to a new understanding of his parents and by extension the teenage child of his own broken marriage. (Director, Gary David Oldberg.)

■ INTERNAL AFFAIRS

(UIP)

Crisp, disturbing thriller in which a buttoned-up policeman (Andy Garcia) investigates a corrupt fellow officer (Richard Gere) and finds his own private life under threat from his quarry. (Nancy Travis, Laurie Metcalf; director, Mike Figgis.)

☐ JOHNNY HANDSOME

(Guild)

Plastic surgery turns facially deformed criminal into Mickey Rourke who then goes after the criminals who framed him. Sombre beauty-and-the-beast thriller marking Walter Hill's welcome return to form. (Ellen Barkin, Elizabeth McGovern, Forest Whitaker, Scott Wilson.)

□ LET'S GET LOST

(Mainline)

The latest chapter in photographer Bruce Weber's fascination with damaged all-American boys. The once beautiful, still brilliant trumpeter Chet Baker looked back at the wreckage of his life shortly before ending it. Handsomely shot, edited in jazz rhythm.

☐ M. HIRE

(Palace)

Misjudged remake of Julien Duvivier's Simenon thriller Panique. Comedian Michel Blanc is the wimpish Monsieur Hire, besotted with Sandrine Bonnaire, who implicates him in a murder committed by her boyfriend. The blank central performance and a rooftop anticlimax betray the uncertainty of former comedy director Patrice Leconte. (Luc Thuillier, André Wilms.)

☐ MUSIC BOX

(Guild)

The shadow of crimes in wartime Hungary falls across an old man in present-day Chicago. His daughter, lawyer Jessica Lange, undertakes his defence. A flat drama, despite a world-weary performance by Armin Mueller-Stahl, more reminiscent of a Lew Grade potboiler than what it is, a Costa-Gavras conscience-stirrer. (Frederic Forrest, Donald Moffat.)

□ ROMERO

(Warner Bros)

Respectful but uninvolving drama-doc account of the politicisation of the Roman Catholic archbishop of El Salvador Oscar Romero (stiffly played by Raul Julia) from his appointment in 1977 to his death at the hands of a government assassin three years later. (Director, John Duigan.)

☐ RUDE AWAKENING

(Rank)

Hippies Eric Roberts and Cheech Marin return to civilisation after 20 years in the jungle to find their friends have become trim yuppie materialists. What's become of '68? Some apt digs at cos, tanning parlours and political apathy; a sprinkling of good jokes and standout performances by Robert Carradine, Julie Hagerty, Buck Henry, Andrea Martin, Cliff De Young, Cindy Williams and

Louise Lasser. (Directors, Aaron Russo, David Greewalt.)

☐ SANTA SANGRE

(Mainline)

or Roll Over, Oedipus. In Alejandro Jodorowski's newest shocker, a son acts as the arms of his dismembered mother, an elephant is tipped over a cliff and its flesh turned into jumbo steaks, while a cult forms round a virgin who has been raped and mutilated, but whose holy blood proves to be red paint and turps. New clothes, perhaps, but the same old emperor. (Axel Jodorowski, Blanca Guerra, Guy Stockwell.)

☐ SEA OF LOVE

(UIP)

Richard Price's taut, strongly characterised script puts four-year absentee Al Pacino back where he belongs—as a cop on the urban beat, where he takes a gamble on Ellen Barkin, even though evidence suggests she committed the serial murders he is investigating. Steamy, atmospheric and keeps you guessing. (John Goodman; director, Harold Becker.)

☐ SHE-DEVIL

(Rank)

The top female film star (Meryl Streep) teamed with top female TV star (Roseanne Barr) directed by top female director (Susan Seidelman) in a script by Fay Weldon. How could it fail? A relentless satire, unaccountably misfiring on all cylinders.

☐ SOCIETY

(Medusa)

Los Angeles rich kid Billy Warlock feels left out of the affluent society; he's human while all the other aristos are shape-shifting slime vampires. An indescribable, shakily acted comedy of unease with outré stomach-turning finale. A genuine surprise. (Director, Brian Yuzna.)

☐ SWEETIE

(Electric/Contemporary) Jane Campion's first feature, a highly stylised story of Australian suburban life. Intriguing, if too close to a Neighbours script directed by David Lynch for comfort. (Genevieve Lemon, Karen Colston, Tom Lycos.)

☐ TROP BELLE POUR TO!!

(Artificial Eye)

Car salesman deserts wife for secretary—a banal premise made serviceable only by having the wife a stunner and the mistress a pudding. But why does Gérard Depardieu cheat on Carole Bouquet (one of the Obscure Objects of Desire)? Bertrand Blier never reveals, settling instead for some stagy asides and sub-Buñuelian timejuggling. (Josiane Balasko.)

■ WHEN I FALL IN LOVE

(Warner Bros)

Louisiana Magnolia Queen (Jessica Lange) marries star college football player (Dennis Quaid): his lovestruck nephew (Timothy Bottoms) stands hopefully on the touchline. Mushy, would-be serious saga punctuated by some ludicrous Old South melodramatics. (Director, Taylor Hackford.)

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CREATURE COMFORTS - (Aardman Animation) Nicholas W. Park

Best Arts Programme

TALES FROM BARCELONA - (Arena) Jana Bokova

Best Drama Series/Serial

TRAFFIK – (Picture Partnership/C4) Simon Moore

Best Original Film Score

MISSISSIPPI BURNING - (Orion) Trevor Jones

and also congratulations to Mark Baker for his Oscar nomination for HILL FARM (Best Animation) and Jonathan Tammuz for his Oscar nomination for THE CHILD EATER (Best Short Film).

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